

REFLECTIONS OF FILIPINO WOMEN COLLEGE GRADUATES FROM
‘EWA PLANTATION TOWN: FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND INDIVIDUAL FACTORS
THAT INFLUENCED THEIR JOURNEY

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DEDICATION

*With love to my parents,
Quirino Benjamin and Crescencia,
who planted the seeds of aspiration and empowered my brother, Jefferson, and me
to reach for our educational goals.
"Study hard and get your college degree. It is the only legacy that we can leave to you" are
words they often told us.
The stories of the Filipino women in this study and their journeys are part of their legacy.*

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ABSTRACT

Although Filipinos and Part-Filipinos now make up the second largest ethnic group in Hawai‘i, they continue to languish in the lower ranks of the socioeconomic hierarchy. Many Filipinos historically have not found the educational system in the state to work to their collective benefit. This qualitative study examines the factors that influenced the educational aspirations and attainment of Filipino women college graduates who grew up in ‘Ewa Plantation Town in the 1970s to 1980s. By bringing to light the factors that were most influential in the participants' educational journey, this study reveals the cultural wealth that existed in a community that seemed lacking in resources. Using phenomenology, the study shows the strength of the family and community and shines light on the transformative influence of the Sodality (a youth organization) and the sense of belonging and camaraderie that empowered the participants to aspire and remain steadfast in the face of adversity. The study makes recommendations to strengthen programs and initiatives that would support Filipino youth in breaking through barriers to fulfill their educational and life aspirations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is an Ilokano expression *narigat ti biag*, "life is hard," that is often said in response to a greeting among immigrant Ilokanos in Hawai'i. The saying aptly describes the plight of the vast number of Filipinos who worked in low-paying hotel, agricultural, and other service jobs. A large percentage of people worked multiple jobs. The abundance and good life Filipinos hoped for in Hawai'i have been harder to attain than they expected. They continue to persist to this day and work hard with the goal that their children will have a better life.

The 75th anniversary in 1981 of the arrival of the first Filipino contract laborers, *Sakadas*, to Hawai'i was a milestone for the Filipino community, which also marked the year I graduated from high school. Many projects were sponsored by the Filipino 75th Anniversary Commemoration Commission to celebrate the history, life, struggles, culture, and triumphs of immigrant and local Filipinos in Hawai'i. Three decades later while conducting research, I discovered a dust-covered book, *Out of This Struggle: The Filipinos in Hawaii*, edited by Teodoro Jr. (1981). The book was one of the projects of the Commission and had an unexpectedly profound effect on the direction of my doctoral journey. It had a strong effect on me perhaps because I was of the generation that had just graduated from high school when the book was published. Perhaps it was because of the earnestness of the authors and the hope they exuded, and of my realization that Filipinos, as a group, have not emerged from the struggles of the past.

The book intended to provide a lasting contribution beyond the ceremonial events marking the momentous occasion and sought to impart to its readers an understanding of the first 75 years of the Filipino experience in Hawai'i. The foreword states,

This book, if it is to serve its purpose, must be seen by readers of the year 2006 as having at least attempted an unblinking look at Filipino history in Hawaii. If this book is at the least bit successful, then by that time it shall no longer be needed; it shall have contributed to making itself unnecessary (Ponce, 1981, p. xi).

The hopeful tone of Ponce's statement is poignant in light of the reality that although Filipinos have increased in number since the 1980s to be the second largest ethnic group in 2012, it remains a "subordinate" ethnic group in comparison to other major ethnic groups in Hawai'i. Filipinos, along with Native Hawaiians, Samoans, and other smaller minority groups continue to have below-median college completion rates, overrepresentation in blue collar occupations, and individual income less than the Hawai'i median. Japanese, White, and Chinese have the highest levels of educational attainment, employment in professional and management positions, and individual income (Okamura, 2008; Okamura 2017).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of my study was to examine the community and family forces that might have influenced the educational aspirations and attainment of Filipino teenage girls who grew up in 'Ewa Plantation Town in the 1970s to 1980s. It sought to understand the essence of their experiences, venturing beyond their tightknit plantation community to be the first in their families to obtain bachelor's degrees. I wanted to understand this phenomenon from the perspective of the lived experiences of the teenage girls, now grown women, whose voices are often missing from written and other recorded accounts of Hawai'i's plantation history. I used phenomenology and case study to conduct qualitative research, which provided valuable insight on how they ascribed meaning to their experiences.

Through my personal experience and work with high school, college, and graduate students, I recognize the importance of a solid supportive network in nurturing aspirations. This study contributes to a greater understanding of the impact that family and community have on students who are the first in their families to graduate from college, who belong to underrepresented ethnic groups, and who come from working-class backgrounds. There are only a few studies on the experiences of Filipinos in Hawai‘i, fewer still on Filipino women,^{*} and rare to find Filipinos included as participants of research on Asian American Pacific Islanders. Not only is this study valuable to strengthening programs and initiatives to increase the number of Filipino youth to break through barriers in order to fulfill their educational and life aspirations, it is also a valuable contribution to the history of ‘Ewa and the lives of the residents.

Research Questions

This study examined these three questions: 1) What factors influenced the educational aspirations, expectations, and attainment of teenage girls from a plantation community, 2) What were the community and family forces that influenced the girls’ educational and career expectations and attainment, and 3) What strategies did the girls use in breaking through barriers to pursue higher education?

Demographic and Socioeconomic Status of Filipinos in Hawai‘i

There are three major periods of the history of Filipinos in Hawai‘i that are tied to their waves of migration to the islands: 1) pre World War II; 2) post World War II to pre-1965; and 3) post-1965. I focused on the early years of the third period that saw significant changes on the national and state levels, with a huge impact on the Filipinos. A discussion of the 1970s and

^{*} "Filipino women" is used in this study to reflect the term that best describes the participants' view of themselves as Filipinos. They strongly identified with being Filipino and possessed a strong connection to their cultural heritage, and to Filipinos as a unified group.

1980s would not be complete without a mention of the 1960s. This decade was marked by the decline of agriculture, sugar and pineapple, as the backbone of the state's economy and the emergence of tourism as the new means of livelihood for most people. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 opened the door for former excluded people to enter the United States, among them Filipinos. The law eliminated an earlier quota system based on national origin and established a new policy that gave preference to reuniting immigrant families and attracting skilled labor to the United States. All these events contributed to the developments in the Filipino community. The decline of agriculture led to the disintegration of plantation-based Filipino communities. As the largest ethnic group working in the pineapple and sugar industries during the 1960s, they were the most affected when the plantation companies closed or phased out their operations. Thousands of Filipinos had to look for jobs in hotels, golf courses, restaurants, and construction sites. "Many others were forced out of their former plantation communities to relocate to urban centers where more job opportunities existed. Thus, the structural integration of Filipinos into wider sectors of Hawai'i's political economy [proceeded] steadily" (Alegado, 1991, p. 22).

The population of Filipinos exploded from a combination of the growth of Hawai'i-born, second-generation children and the influx of immigrants who came after the 1965 immigration law was passed. "Since 1970, the Philippines has topped the list of Asian countries with the most citizens emigrating to the United States" (Nieva, 1994, p. 30). However, the percentage of skilled workers from the Philippines decreased dramatically from the 1970s. Family members arriving from the Philippines outnumbered occupational immigrants, 86.9 percent to 7.6, percent respectively. Although a number of Filipinos who immigrated to Hawai'i were more educated than those who came before 1965, lack of suitable or adequate employment was a problem for

them, women as well as the men. Women who had taught for several years in Philippine schools were forced to work in blue-collar jobs, such as hotel maids, salespersons, receptionists, and waitresses. State licensing and professional requirements often hindered otherwise qualified Filipinas from acquiring high status and higher paying jobs. (Nieva, 1994).

The disparities in socioeconomic status among the various ethnic groups in Hawai'i are well documented (Libarios, 2013; Murakami, 2013; Okamura, 1991, 2008, 2017; Teodoro, 1981). On the three common indicators of socioeconomic status—educational attainment, income, and occupation—Filipinos in Hawai'i are on the lower end. "While other ethnic groups in Hawaii have been able to use educational attainment as a means for upward social mobility, Filipinos historically have not found the educational system to work to their advantage" (Agbayani, 1996, p. 149).

The participants in this study were teenagers during the late 1970s through the 1980s. According to the 1980 U.S. census, Filipinos had the lowest median number of years of schooling completed in comparison to the other major ethnic groups in Hawai'i: Whites (13.3), Chinese (12.8), Japanese (12.6), and Filipinos (12.1). The disparity is even wider when considering the percentage of those 25 years and over who had bachelor's degrees: Whites (31percent), Chinese (30 percent), Japanese (25 percent), Filipinos (12 percent), and Hawaiians (9 percent) (Agbayani, 1996). The enrollment of Filipinos at the University of Hawai'i (UH) community colleges showed a slight increase from 12.2 percent in 1978 to 16.4 percent in 1987. The percentage enrolled at UH Mānoa was even lower despite the three-fold percentage increase from 2.1 percent in 1971 to 6.3 percent by 1987 (Haas, 1998). In 1980, Filipinos were significantly overrepresented in the public school system (18.7 percent) but highly underrepresented at the UH systemwide (8.4 percent) and UH-Mānoa (3.9 percent) (UH

Institutional Research and Analysis Office [UH IRAO], n.d.). The lower educational attainment of Filipinos corresponded with a higher percentage employed as service workers, equipment operators, and laborers (48 percent) compared to non-Filipinos (26 percent) in Hawai‘i. On the higher end of the occupational scale, a mere 9 percent Filipinos were management, professional, or technical workers versus 26 percent non-Filipinos (*Filipino Immigrants*, 1985).

In 1972 the first major institutional response of the University of Hawai‘i relating to the Filipinos was initiated by a group of Philippine-born graduate students, non-Filipino and Filipino faculty, Hawaii-born Filipino undergraduate students, and a Filipino government official working with immigrant communities. They convinced UH administrators to establish a program, "Operation Manong" (OM), to assist recently arrived immigrant children from the Philippines. The term "*manong*," was selected to reclaim the Ilokano kinship term of respect used to refer to an older brother but was used by some non-Filipinos and Filipinos in a derogatory manner at the time. The group received funds from a church and a major federal grant to start the program (Agbayani, 1996).

During the 1980s, the University's response became more strategic, and efforts were more organized to support Filipino students in recruitment, persistence, and graduation (Agbayani, 1996). Filipinos also turned to community and religious organizations for social support. Filipinos have had strong religious faith and the "church was a focal point for many of their social and organizational activities" (Lebra, 1991. p. 248).

Context of Study

This section describes the setting of the study and demographics on the population of ‘Ewa Plantation Town in the 1970s. It provides historical background on Immaculate Conception Church and the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Sodality).

‘Ewa Plantation Town

Sugar's legacy is intertwined with the political and cultural history of Hawai‘i and left an indelible mark on the land, people, and society. ‘Ewa Plantation Company (EPC) was established in 1890 and ‘Ewa Plantation Town emerged as a company town. With the majestic banyan trees and royal palms that lined the stretch of Renton Road from Immaculate Conception in Fernandez Village to Tenney Village, it was unlike other plantation towns on O‘ahu that I had encountered. Traveling through the canopy of branches when I visited ‘Ewa for the first time in the early 1970s, I discovered a rural oasis with mango and *marrungay*, a favorite Filipino vegetable, in practically every yard. Vegetable gardens, bananas, bougainvilleas, plumerias and flowers of other varieties were also abundant. Greeted by the sounds of dogs barking, roosters crowing, and children playing on the streets or riding their bicycles, I recalled a simpler living reminiscent of the village I came from in the Philippines.

The layout of the town was reflective of the former hierarchy of workers' positions within the company. The plantation manager's house was the only two-story residential building in ‘Ewa. The large colonial style house stood on well-manicured grounds and had an arched canopy supported by columns gracing the front entrance. It also featured a guest house and a grand entry drive with a porte cochère. On the same side of the street as the manager's mansion, as it was called by many of the residents, were three middle managers' homes. These homes were part of Renton Village, which included the homes across the street where the supervisors and skilled workers lived. It was also known as "Haole Camp" because most residents were originally White middle management and skilled laborers ("National Register," 1996). The non-management or non-skilled workers lived in the other villages on each side of Renton Road or Fort Weaver Road. The larger villages located mauka (towards the mountain) of Renton Road were Varona (also

known as Banana Camp), Fernandez, and Tenney. Makai or towards the ocean were the smaller and older Mill and C villages. Located northeast, near St. Barnabas Church where Child and Family Services now stands, were Lower and Middle (also known as Korean Camp) villages. Along Renton Road in the lot adjacent to the manager's mansion was the Plantation Management Office, 'Ewa Shopping Basket, and the mill buildings.

The life of the community centered on the production of sugar and was the reason for its very existence. A reciprocal relationship existed in which the employees provided labor for the cultivation of the crop and refinement of the cane, staffed the offices and production line, and maintained facilities and equipment. In turn, the company offered employment; provided housing; maintained the roads, street lighting, sewer system, water system, and other infrastructure; and took care of health and social services. EPC had a multicultural workforce comprised of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, and Hawaiian. Sugar planters recruited workers of different ethnic groups to discourage workers from uniting for higher wages and better benefits (Chen, 2011; Teodoro, 1981). However, by the late 1970s, the plantation workforce was predominantly Filipino and Japanese.

In 1970, Oahu Sugar Company (OSC) purchased 'Ewa Plantation Company, and the two merged in 1971. When O'ahu Sugar acquired EPC, it consolidated the operations and management divisions of the two companies and the 'Ewa offices were moved to Waipahu. The change in ownership and management dramatically affected the lifeblood of the town—creating economic uncertainty, disrupting the social support and services, and neglecting the upkeep of the facilities and infrastructure of the town. O'ahu Sugar did not provide as many amenities as EPC did earlier, and the community's needs were no longer met entirely from within the

community. O‘ahu Sugar relinquished the operations of the Tenney Recreation Center. Workers and their families now had to go to Kaiser Clinic in the neighboring town of Waipahu for health services.

Five years after the acquisition in 1975, the plantation manager's house was vacated and community leaders lamented that the morale and community spirit that was strong during EPC's reign had diminished. Many residents referred to the changeover as "four or five years ago" and the reason for why the town did not look as neat, the recreation center was rundown, and the lack of bustle. However, most ‘Ewa residents remained loyal to the town and continued to shop at Ewa Shopping Basket, have their hair cut at the town's barber shop and beauty salon, conducted business at the post office, and banked in a room next to the post office with representatives from Bank of Hawai‘i (Yim, 1975). The identity and lifestyle that flowed from the sugar plantation began to wane. Yet the bonds among families remained strong. The shared history, mutual interests, and close relationships of the families helped them to cope with the changes. The entire community was like an extended family.

Coming together to show support or assistance in times of need or challenging times was typical of the culture of the ‘Ewa plantation community and characteristic of the Filipino tradition where neighbors would physically help relocate a family and their bamboo house by gathering underneath the house and carrying it to its new location. The term for this is *bayanihan* and has come to mean a communal unity, work, and cooperation to achieve a common goal, which aptly captures the strong sense of community. On the plantation, it was presumed that you would just show up to support your neighbors with whatever assistance was needed in times of

family crises, fixing a house or car, or preparing food for celebrations. As long as one person knew about it, the word would spread and it was not necessary to personally ask for help from individuals.

Contrary to some of the residents' assessment, a strong "community spirit" prevailed. Although the departure of EPC led to the weakening of 'Ewa's infrastructure, and the community was beginning to seek a new identity, not entirely of its own volition, the residents remained loyal to 'Ewa and supportive of each other. This was a closeness formed by the shared experience of living in a self-contained community—working, socializing, worshipping, and attending school together. The bonds that were formed among co-workers, neighbors, and friends were as strong as any shared by relatives. Thus, the network of people on the plantation was firmly integrated into each other's family lives and was a source of familial capital and social capital.

An environmental impact study (Reddick, 1979) that was conducted in 1979 described an evolving community and the demographic and behavioral characteristics of the residents. An estimated 2,870 people were living in 'Ewa in 1979. Half of the families were longtime residents of 'Ewa and since 1945. One-third of the families had moved into 'Ewa only since 1974. The influx of new residents occurred after O'ahu Sugar merged with EPC. The two most common places the new residents lived before residing in 'Ewa were Waipahu and Philippines. Although retired and current sugar workers living in 'Ewa town were no longer purposely segregated and assigned to villages based on ethnicity, Renton with its larger houses retained its status as home to higher income residents. Disproportionately more Japanese than Filipinos lived in Renton at the time, despite the higher percentage of Filipinos (62%) who resided in 'Ewa compared to the Japanese (16%) (Reddick, 1979). This could have been a consequence of the White managers

and supervisors leaving after EPC merged with O‘ahu Sugar, giving the opportunity for the next tier of skilled workers and their families to move into Renton.

Overall, the socioeconomic status of the population of ‘Ewa Plantation was lower compared to the entire population of the state. In 1979, the median educational level of the adult ‘Ewa population was 9.9 years. Less than one-fourth had graduated from high school compared to three-fourths of the state population. Of the those surveyed, 3.4 percent indicated they were students, which was two times lower than the 8.4 percent that were at enrolled in the University of Hawai‘i system in 1980 (Reddick, 1979).

In 1979, two-thirds of the adults in ‘Ewa were in the workforce and one-third indicated they were either housewives or retired. Of those in the workforce, one out of four worked for O‘ahu Sugar. ‘Ewa was a working class town with the population overrepresented in non-professional occupations compared to that of the entire state population (44% versus 26%). Nearly half of the adults worked within or near ‘Ewa town. The annual per capita income was reflective of the occupational levels, and was significantly lower for those in ‘Ewa (\$3,600) compared to the annual per capita income for the state (\$8,115) (Reddick, 1979, p. 54; *Filipino Immigrant*, 1985).

In their pastime, gardening was by far the most popular activity. The youth played in the park or on the streets and the neighbors talked as they watered and raked their yards in the afternoon. The villages came alive with the sounds of everyone mingling outdoors. The youth would organize themselves and played volleyball, basketball, or other games. Residents also enjoyed fishing and bowling. Some also liked to swim, go to the movies, or dance hula. Cockfighting was popular among the men. Two-thirds or more of these activities took place in the ‘Ewa and ‘Ewa Beach areas (Reddick, 1979).

Filipinos in ‘Ewa Plantation Town

In 1979, Filipinos (43.6 percent Ilokans and 18.4 percent Visayans) and Japanese (16 percent) constituted the largest ethnic groups within the community. More Ilokans lived in Varona than any of the other villages, whereas, Visayans were more concentrated in Fernandez. Other ethnic groups living in the town were far fewer (2 percent Portuguese, 3 percent Puerto Rican, 2 percent Hawaiian), including other Filipino sub-ethnic groups. The ratio of immigrants to non-immigrants was one to three, with the more recent immigrants coming from the Ilocos Norte region of the Philippines where the vast number of Filipinos in Hawai‘i came from. Not surprisingly, the language spoken the most besides English was Ilokano, with about one of every three residents indicating they were fluent.

Immaculate Conception Church and the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Sodality)

The churches were vital to the stability of the community. ‘Ewa Community Church and Immaculate Conception stood on either side of ‘Ewa Elementary School, and ‘Ewa Hongwanji Mission was located along the other end of Renton Road. They were haven for the families to worship and socialize. Compared to the rest of the state, a higher percentage of ‘Ewa's population (85 percent) attended church versus the overall percentage for the state (57 percent). I witnessed the strong influence of religion the first time I rode with my neighbors in their station wagon as we passed Immaculate Conception. In unison, everyone in the car made the sign of the cross as we drove by the church, which was the first indication I got of how ingrained the religious practices and observances were in the life of the families.

Immaculate Conception Church was established in the mid-1800s in Honouliuli, near the shores of Pearl Harbor along the area that is known as West Loch. The spread of Catholicism in the ‘Ewa district can be traced back to this church. Father Raymond Delalande, from France, was

the first priest to serve from 1857 to 1891 in the 'Ewa area, including the Waianae Coast and as far as the North Shore. The church was initially named St. Theresa, and was relocated and rebuilt three times. It has stood on Renton Road since 1929, a wooden structure with pointed, arched windows lining the length of the building from the rear to the altar (EVANPONTON, 2015; "Ewa's Immaculate Conception," 1974). A rectory and multipurpose hall also were located on the parish grounds. There was no Catholic school on the premises. Hence, the priest and lay people filled the gap and taught the weekly religious education classes in the homes of church members for the youth in elementary school and the church hall for the older ones in middle and high schools. Various societies and groups were very active and helped with other aspects of running the parish.

In the Catholic Church, Sodality is a general name for an association or society established for the purposes of devotion or mutual help or action. The term comes from the French word *sodalite* or Latin *sodalitas*, meaning fellowship, brotherhood, or fraternity ("Sodality," n.d.; Hardon, 1980). The Sodality of the Blessed Virgin was founded in Rome in 1563 and spread to more than 100 countries at its peak. In 1952, over 700 youth from Hawai'i Catholic schools and churches gathered for the first island-wide convention. The last islands-wide convention that I am aware of was held in 1960 and was attended by more than 500 girls ("Oahu Sodalists Honor Blessed Virgin Mary," 1952; "500 Sodalists to Attend," 1960). However, a worldwide movement to restore the original spirituality and purpose of sodalities resulted in the renaming of Sodality to Christian Life Communities in 1971, signaling a new beginning (Hardon, 1980).

Interestingly, Father Benito Caraballo, the pastor of Immaculate Conception from 1969 until the 1980s, chose to keep with the name Sodality, which was an option. Perhaps his decision was influenced by the patron saint of the church, the Blessed Virgin Mary. He appealed to church leaders, Mrs. Daclison and Mrs. Estillore, to revive the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary (referred to as Sodality for short and its members as Sodalists) and serve as its advisors. They agreed to do so, and in 1971, organized interested girls as Sodality members. They led primarily by example and shared stories of their experiences as a way of instilling the virtues and skills for the Sodalists to develop their faith and be good citizens. According to the Sodality advisors, the purpose of the Sodality group was to instill a devotion to Jesus through his mother, Mary. Their explanation was consistent with a statement made by a former priest that the goal was to "encourage, among the Sodalists, a deep and sincere devotion" for Jesus through Mary ("Father Miyashiro," 1959). Membership to this society was open to teenage girls from middle school to high school. The advisors fostered a deep spirituality, love for humankind, and the virtues of purity, charity, faith, humility, obedience, and patience.

In practice, Sodality served as a sanctuary that provided support through religious education and youth activities. The Sodalists participated in a variety of activities that included celebrating mass together every month, marching in processions, performing in the Christmas program, and sports. They also organized the church's annual easter egg hunt, initiated the graduation banquet and dance, made leis for Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day, were actively involved with church council, and played a big part in the annual installation banquet.

Besides Sodality, there was its all-boys counterpart, Junior Holy Name Society (Junior Holy Name), and these other church groups: Holy Name Society, Sacred Heart Society, Filipino Catholic Club, and Junior Filipino Catholic Club. The Filipino Catholic clubs had the most

members and filled a social need in the community, especially after the diminished investment of O‘ahu Sugar in the recreational facilities and social activities. The groups were instrumental in perpetuating Filipino religious rituals and practices such as the processions, Flores de Mayo, and Christmas caroling.

Background of Researcher

"No saanna nga ammo a tumaliaw iti naggapuanna, saanto a makadanon iti papananna." is an old Filipino proverb that captures the essence of my study. The saying suggests that knowing one's roots is integral to finding and achieving one's destination in life. In my own journey, my family, community, and faith have been vital forces. These have been my inspiration and strength for all that I have strived to achieve and my motivation for pursuing a doctoral degree. In this section, I provide a narrative on my background because, like the participants in my study, I grew up in ‘Ewa and was also a member of Sodality.

I was born in Suyo, a barrio in the municipality of Dingras located in the northernmost province of Ilocos Norte in the Philippines. This province is where the vast majority of the Filipinos who were recruited to work on Hawai‘i's sugar plantations came from. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 paved the way for my parents, Crescencia and Quirino Benjamin, and me to join our extended family in Hawai‘i.

The pillars of my family were my two grandmothers, Apolonia and Celestina, whom we called *Nana* and *Mamang*, respectively. These two giants in our lives were both widowed during World War II and never remarried, choosing to devote their lives to their families until they passed away at the ages of 110 and 97. I have two brothers: Charles, who was born just months before we left the Philippines and passed away of jaundice five days after birth; and Jefferson,

who was born in Hawai‘i on July 4th. He had a special standing in our family, being born in America and on Independence Day, and thus was named after Thomas Jefferson.

When we left the Philippines in 1969 I was 7 years old. We traveled onboard the passenger liner President Cleveland. A throng of relatives welcomed us when we disembarked at Pier 11 by Aloha Tower. They had come to the islands before us, hoping like many Filipinos that it was the land of *glorya*—glorious, paradise, full of promise. My aunt's husband inducted my parents and me into the community by mixing soil from the aina (land) with water and making us drink the potion. In retrospect, the sensation of the concoction coursing through my body was symbolic of the bond that I would form with Hawai‘i and its people. I grew up in Waipahu and ‘Ewa on the west side of ‘Oahu surrounded by sugarcane fields. ‘Ewa Plantation Town is where my family planted our roots and where I lived during my formative years.

For as long as I can remember my parents, grandmothers, and relatives would say in Ilokano, *"Ilalaingmo ti agbasa ta iramramanna kami. Awan maka takaw ti adalmo. Isu laeng ti maitedmi kenka."* I understood it to mean, "Do well in your studies so that your success will be ours, too. Education is something that no one can take away from you. It is the only thing that we can give to you." Their dreams were never far from my mind propelling me forward, but the expectation for me to strive and excel, not only for a better future for me but also for my extended family, by blood or affinity, and community, was also an immense responsibility that I bore.

The power of my parents' vision for their family has had a profound effect on every aspect of my life. Their hope was juxtaposed against the reality of the circumstances of being immigrants, having limited job opportunities with only their high school education, and starting their lives in Hawaii with nothing more than what our relatives were able to share in the form of housing and knowledge of job openings in the service industry. My parents instilled in me that I

would go to college as a matter of necessity and they did everything in their power to keep me on track. They were very strict and protective of me as I was the oldest child and a girl. They raised me to be respectful of elders, to work hard, be humble, be compassionate, be of service to others, and follow the Catholic Church teachings. I rarely socialized outside of school, church, family gatherings, or other organized activities.

Growing up in the plantation communities of Waipahu and 'Ewa had its advantages and difficulties. After living in Waipahu for three years with relatives and family friends, my parents, brother, and I moved to Varona Village in 'Ewa Plantation Town in 1973. I was raised in a household with clear gender roles about domestic tasks and proper manners. However, the role of the patriarch in our family, my father, was kept in balance with strong female figures, my mother and two grandmothers. These three women learned to navigate their own paths without a father or husbands and served as powerful role models. They adhered to traditional roles of the women regarding household chores, but my mother and maternal grandmother outwardly asserted their positions when they felt strongly about something. My paternal grandmother had a quiet strength and grace about her. She was not effusive but was undoubtedly a spiritual person whose aura radiated with wisdom, serenity, compassion, and unconditional love.

Other than my relatives who were nurses, I did not know of any other Filipinos in professional positions in Hawai'i. My father's uncles and his two cousins, who were engineers in California, visited the summer before I entered high school. Their visit was a pivotal point in my life and served as evidence that going to college was possible and being Filipino was something to be proud of. A picture that my father's uncle showed of his Cadillac, with the U.S. and

Philippine flags on the hood of his car, was also a powerful image that was emblematic of the equal status and importance of these two countries in his life. Above all, it showed his pride in being Filipino.

Teachers and counselors who believed in me outweighed those who intentionally or unintentionally undermined my aspirations and academic potential. Strong female figures in movies inspired me to do well academically and strive for excellence. For example, Ali McGraw played a character who was battling cancer while attending Radcliffe, Harvard's sister school, in "Love Story," and Barbara Streisand took the role of an activist protesting the Vietnam war in "The Way We Were," and of "Yentl," a Jewish woman who dressed and lived like a man in order to study the Talmudic Law; these were roles I tried to emulate. Also, stories of my tomboy mother chasing away the boys who bullied her younger sister in high school and getting a scar on her calf from being the only person among her softball teammates to slide into first base inspired me to break the mold.

My family's traditions and practices were intertwined with Catholicism. When I was a sophomore in high school, a neighbor invited me to join Sodality at 'Ewa's Immaculate Conception Church, where both of our families worshipped. I saw it as an opportunity to meet other teenage girls. Sodality did connect me with other young women and provided so much more. The transformative experience was a significant influence on my educational and personal growth.

I have devoted my career to ensuring that individuals have access to a quality education, regardless of their social or economic circumstances. I have been fortunate to be able to pursue this passion in my work within the University of Hawai'i. There is no doubt in my mind that earning advanced degrees have made a significant difference in my and my brother's lives, and

that of our family. There were barriers that we had to climb or tear down. I recognized the situation, but at the time I just thought it was something normal to overcome. I hope that my study will be able to contribute to enhancing the quality of life for the next generations and honor the lives of those who have paved the way for my peers and me to have a better life.

CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Researchers have observed the importance of adolescence as a "critical time for forming aspirations for the future, especially with regard to career aspirations" (Hill et. al., 2004, p. 1491). Similarly, Mau and Bikos (2000, p. 186) and Mello (2008, p. 1069) cited several studies that considered high school educational goals and vocational aspirations as among the most significant predictors of eventual educational and vocational attainment.

The driving force for my study stems from a keen interest in the source of first-in-family, underrepresented youths' aspirations to pursue higher education and successfully attain bachelor's degrees. In Hawai'i, higher education attainment and socioeconomic status of Filipinos remains low (Libarios & Bachini, 2016). The underrepresentation of Filipinos in higher education compared to their broader population in the state and in the public schools impacts the upward mobility of the Filipino community along the socioeconomic spectrum.

In this chapter, I review the literature on relevant studies related to the influences of family and community on the post-high school plans and college experiences of first-generation, meaning first-in-family, college students. The most relevant concepts related to this topic are those presented by Yosso (2005) on Community Cultural Wealth (CCW); Gofen (2009) on family capital; and Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005), Rosa and Tudge (2013), and Guerrero, Hishinuma, Andrade, Nishimura, and Cunanan (2006), and Guerrero et. al (2010) on human development, including Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development and its centrality to the ecological framework. These three concepts are strength-based and view family and community as valuable resources, or assets, as opposed to needs-based which highlight a

deficit approach. While all three have relevance to this study, they overlap considerably.

Therefore, I selected CCW as my theoretical framework because it best fits the experiences of the participants.

The dimensions of success in the American educational system, especially for those who are not of the dominant culture, are less understood than the components of failure. Literature on individuals of first-generation, underrepresented ethnic minorities, and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds are commonly depicted in deficit terms as facing challenges, lacking adequate preparation, needing assistance, having a poor command of the English language, and struggling in negotiating the school environment. Prior research has problematized these groups as lacking the requisite characteristics and resources to succeed compared to other students. Some explanations for the disparities in academic performance and educational attainment of underrepresented groups have focused on the cultural deprivation, cultural differences, and the socializing influences of society. The premise of deficit thinking holds minority students and families at fault for poor academic performance because: "a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills, and b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75).

Agbayani (1996, p. 150) argued there are numerous ways to describe a phenomenon, situation, or problem.

How a situation is described or a problem defined is linked to who is viewing the problem and the values held by the observer. The person whose definition is accepted and acted upon has power. The major consequence of possessing the power to label persons or groups as "problems" is that the burden for adjusting is placed on the one without

power. It is usually the individual rather than the institution that is asked to change or make accommodations, particularly if the student is from a less advantaged group of minority.

Bourdieu, Critical Race Theory, and Community Cultural Wealth

Drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's theory on cultural and social reproduction, studies have examined educational systems' role in reproducing social inequality by elevating or endorsing certain cultural practices of the dominant classes (O'Shea, 2015). Some have determined that first-generation, underrepresented, and others who are not part of the mainstream culture lack the essential capital to succeed. Bourdieu first became aware of the notion of cultural capital while conducting research and saw it as a possible explanation for the "unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes by relating academic success . . . to the distribution of cultural capital between classes and class fractions" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47). Bourdieu contended that children not born into families possessing certain cultural habits could nonetheless acquire them through formal schooling and, thus, have the potential for social mobility (Yosso, 2005). However, Bourdieu's thinking "about how a hierarchical society reproduces itself has often been interpreted as a way to explain why the academic and social outcomes of people of color are significantly lower than the outcomes of Whites" (Yosso, 2005, p. 70).

Yosso challenged traditional interpretations of Bourdieu's theory through the lens of critical race theory (CRT), then presented an alternative concept about culture that she called community cultural wealth (CCW). CRT adds to efforts to expand the discourse on racism and its intersections with other forms of subordination beyond the limits of a black/white binary, and acknowledges how struggles for social justice are hindered by discussions that ignore the range

of experiences of people of color. It challenges the dominant ideology and "claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy" (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993, p. 6) and asserts the experiential knowledge of people of color as valid and essential in analyzing and understanding racial inequality.

In the mid-1990s scholars formally articulated the application of CRT to the field of education. Solorzano presented five tenets of CRT to guide theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy: 1) intercentricity of race and racism; 2) challenge to dominant ideology; 3) commitment to social justice; 4) centrality of experiential knowledge; and 5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches (Yosso, 2005). Yosso recognized that these themes are not new taken by themselves, but collectively presents a counterpoint to the existing forms of scholarship. She defined CRT in education as a "theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses" (Yosso, 2005). Her work to document and analyze the educational access, persistence and graduation of underrepresented students is informed by CRT.

Deficit thinking is pervasive in U.S. society, which is mirrored by educational institutions and those who work there. Yosso argued that CRT can challenge personal prejudices expressed by educators as well as critically examine systemic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and reproduce educational inequities for students from non-dominant sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds (Yosso, 2005). CRT aims to unleash the liberatory potential of schooling. "This acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower" (Yosso, 2005, p. 74). CRT draws explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, and parables. Counter storytelling disputes

deficit storytelling and gives voice to people who do not often have the opportunity to share their experiences and tell their stories from their point of view. It can fortify "traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32).

Yosso critiqued the ways that Bourdieu's work, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, has been used to discuss society and racial inequity, and establish why whites and students of color succeed at different rates in education. Bourdieu described cultural capital as an "accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society" (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). He stated that cultural, social capital, and economic capital are attainable through one's family and/or formal schooling. The dominant groups are able to maintain power in society because others have limited access to garnering and learning the strategies to use these forms of capital for social mobility (p. 76). Although Bourdieu's work attempted to offer a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, his theory of cultural capital has been misappropriated to elevate some communities as culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor. This sets white, middle class culture as the standard by which all others are to be measured. The community cultural wealth framework is not a repudiation of Bourdieu's work but an attempt to expand on the narrowly defined range of assets and characteristics of Bourdieu's cultural capital theory (Yosso, 2005; O'Shea, 2015).

The concept of culture for students of color has different meanings in social science. Some view it as synonymous with race and ethnicity, while others see it from a broader perspective of characteristics and forms of social histories and identities. For Yosso's purposes, she defined culture as "behaviors and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a group of people" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). Through the lens of CRT, Yosso presented six forms of capital that are dynamic processes that build on one another as parts of community cultural wealth: 1)

aspirational capital, 2) linguistic capital, 3) familial capital, 4) social capital, 5) navigational capital, and 6) resistance capital (p. 79-81). Aspirational capital is an example of the overlapping quality of the various forms of CCW. It is nurtured in the familial and social contexts, relayed through linguistic storytelling that offers tips to help navigate and challenge oppressive situations. The six forms of capital that constitute CCW have particular features.

1. *Aspirational capital* refers to the ability to envision a future full of possibilities despite not having any idea on how to achieve or it being seemingly unattainable. It can be explicit words of encouragement or actions or examples of overcoming adversities.
2. *Linguistic capital* pertains to the intellectual and social skills that are needed to function in more than one language, medium of communication, culture or community's language code, or artistic expression. This form of capital facilitates the ability to adapt to different situations, people, and context.
3. *Familial capital* refers to a family's and extended family's way of thinking, behaving, or being that cultivates a sense of community history, memories, cultural values, and skills. They include the stories, advice, expectations, or wisdom families pass on that shape a person's character and how to deal with situations.
4. *Social capital* relates to community resources—persons, programs, and organizations—that have played a role in a person's growth. Peers and others in social network can provide emotional support or the means to navigate through social institutions.

5. *Navigational capital* refers to the ability to negotiate systems and institutions that have been developed without considering communities of color. It is also a combination of inner resources, social skills, and cultural strategies that help a person to confront, survive, and recover from adversity, as well as learn from the experience to better function in the future.
6. *Resistance capital* refers to insights and skills developed through oppositional behavior that confronts inequality. Acts of resistance could be in response to oppression or the status quo.

The six forms of capital are imbued with the richness of cultural assets and resources possessed by communities on the periphery of the dominant culture. The CCW framework attempts to discern the multiple dimensions of a community culture that influence persistence and social mobility. In discussing CCW, rather than using the term "cultural capital," I discuss the various forms of capital (aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistance, linguistic) that together constitute the culture of the community.

O'Shea (2015) applied Yosso's CCW framework in examining how the first-in-family (or first generation) students employed existing and established capital reserves to transition into the higher education environment. O'Shea focused on Hispanic students and communities of color. While the forms of capital that Yosso delineated include cultural and ethnic specificity, O'Shea (2015) argued that the concept of CCW can be applied more broadly to other non-dominant and underrepresented groups in society.

O'Shea considered the framework as a "solid means to interrogate data in terms of what first-in-family individuals bring to the university environment and how these types of capitals potentially enable them to enact success" (O'Shea, 2015, p. 6). She conducted in-depth

interviews with 23 students who were first-in-their families to attend university. The regional university in Australia is located in an area with comparably lower educational outcomes and higher unemployment rates. Her preliminary analysis indicated participants relied on a variety of personal and familial resources to attend and survive in college, and her study included each component of CCW. However, in the particular findings that O'Shea reported, she focused on three key forms of capital: aspirational, familial, and resistance.

Cases of aspirational capital ranged from sustaining a dream of going to college through encouraging family members to consider going to college as a viable option. O'Shea discussed the intersection of aspirational capital with navigational capital in the context of Appadurai's insight that those who are privileged have better access to resources that enable them to "explore the future more frequently and more realistically" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 69). For individuals to be able to "enact future desired selves, it is necessary for individuals to have the opportunity to practice aspiration building and move beyond their 'brittle horizon of aspirations'" (O'Shea, 2015, p. 13).

In the context of the participants in O'Shea's study, in which many of them indicated receiving government benefits or having low income, resistance capital was conceptualized as a form of resistance to the status quo. For the older female participants in the study, their attendance at the university was in itself a form of resistance to "constraints around what is deemed as possible" (O'Shea, 2015, p. 14). Family and community, or familial capital, also provided embodied support that mediated the sense of isolation.

O'Shea's study found Yosso's CCW framework to be valuable in its qualitative analysis of how first-generation students access and convert capital within the higher education environment. Familial capital was a particularly powerful influence on the participants. O'Shea

argued that emphasis on students entering the university environment should be less on "working upon the students to change or alter them in order to engender a 'sense of fit' with the institution. Rather, administrators need to rethink the notion of integration within higher education organisations" (O'Shea, 2015, p. 17). She agreed with Nunez's position that for Latino students, effective integration may "not represent a full commitment to the institution's mores...but, rather represent a distinctive 'sense of agency'" (O'Shea, 2015, p. 17). In other words, it is important for institutions to recognize the forms of capital, or assets, that students bring with them to the institution and rethink of how to work and build on their strengths instead of "changing" or "altering" them, so they fit into the college environment.

Family Capital

Gofen's concept of family capital (Gofen, 2009), which complements CCW, is another concept that has relevance for my study. Gofen sought to learn what enabled first-generation students to break the intergenerational cycle of educational inheritance. He conducted and analyzed fifty in-depth, semi-structured interviews of first-generation higher education students in Israel to explore what enabled them to attain higher education even though their parents did not. Using grounded theory, he examined both the nature and the mechanism of the strategies that facilitated the "breakthrough phenomenon." The study revealed that the strategy is "contained in various aspects of family life, especially with respect to enormous parental investment during the formative years for the sake of a better future for their children" (Gofen, 2009, p. 115). A family capital conceptual framework was chosen by the researchers given the social context of the study and the meaning of capital as an investment that is made for the benefit of future outcomes (Gofen, 2009). "Family capital emphasizes the contextual setting of the family in which aspects of social capital, human capital, and cultural capital intersect" (Gofen,

2009, p. 115). Gofen defines family capital as "The ensemble of means, strategies, and resources embodied in the family's way of life that influences the future of their children. Family capital is implicitly and explicitly reflected through behavior, emotional processes, and core values" (p. 115). The concept of family capital endeavors to incorporate all facets of investment made by the family for the children's future, unlike social capital, which highlights only interpersonal relationships, or cultural capital's emphasis on values. Gofen's definition aligns with Yosso's wide-ranging elements of familial capital, from cultural knowledges being nurtured among the immediate and extended family to the importance of being connected to the community and resources. Familial capital also stresses modeling behavior to nurture growth and foster strategies, such as caring behavior and coping skills.

The patterns of first-generation students' academic achievement linkage to parental involvement are consistent with research concerning the family's influence on the academic achievements of children. Studies have found parents' aspirations and expectations for their children had the greatest effect in the children's success from K – 12 years, especially for minorities and disadvantaged students. Parental aspiration has also been associated with the aspirations of postsecondary education students (Gofen, 2009). Family solidarity, respect, and ambition are fundamental to the participants' upbringing. Parents placed their children at the very top of the family's priorities and expected them to do well in school. The parents in the study had great confidence in their children's abilities and zealously expressed their belief.

Theories of Human Development

Over the past ten years, studies on Filipino adolescents and other youth in Hawai'i have found that family support, positive peer influences, cultural identification, learning genealogy, and speaking a language other than English were among the protective factors to mediate

academic, behavioral, and/or emotional difficulties (Guerrero et. al, 2006; Guerrero et. al, 2010; Borrero et. al, 2012). The studies drew on concepts found in developmental psychopathology and its associated concepts of resilience, protective factors, and risk factors. Social work's ecological, phenomenological, and strengths-based approaches were also applied.

Ecological Framework

Central to the ecological framework is Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development, which evolved from ecology to bioecology. Ecological theory views development as the "result of interactions between characteristics of a person and the environment over the course of one's life" (Dennis et. al, 2005, p. 224). Rosa and Tudge (2013) identified these three phases of the development of Bronfenbrenner's framework: 1) Phase 1 (1973-1979) culminated with the publication of *The Ecology of Human Development* (1979); 2) Phase 2 (1980-1993) modified his theory with more emphasis on the role of the individual and greater concern with developmental processes; and 3) Phase 3 (1993–2006) developed into a bioecological framework. From the start, Bronfenbrenner viewed the developing individual as influencing, and being influenced, by the environment despite calling the theory *human* development (Dennis et. al, 2005). "Subsequent reformulations of his original ideas resulted as he came to stress the role played by the individual; the impact of time; and most important of all, proximal processes" (Rosa and Tudge, 2013, p. 244).

Bronfenbrenner conceptualized the environment topologically as an arrangement of four interconnected structures displayed as concentric circles with those closer to the developing individual enclosed in the innermost circle. He perceived the environment as inherently linked with the individuals within it and often referred to the environment as ecological, which underscores his focus on the ecological system that included the individual. The four structures

are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Microsystem is defined by Bronfenbrenner as the most proximal setting, in which a person is situated, such as home, childcare center, playground, and place of work, and in which the developing person can interact face-to-face with others (Rosa and Tudge, 2013). These face-to-face interactions, along with support from family members and peers are among the most common and important proximal processes for adolescents and are crucial to academic outcomes (Dennis et. al, 2005).

Mesosystem is the second level and consists of interactions between two microsystems in which the developing person actively participates. Exosystem is the third level of the four structures. The developing person is not situated in this system, and does not participate actively within it, but experiences its influence such as a child's parent's workplace. The trademark of macrosystem is its focus on the institutional systems of a culture or subculture, such as the social, education, economic, legal, and political systems.

Developmental Psychopathology

Developmental psychopathology takes a different approach to studying human development. Concepts associated with developmental psychopathology include risks, assets, protective factors, vulnerability, and resilience. It focuses on patterns of human development that lead to adaptive and maladaptive outcomes, examining high-risk groups and how risks interact with other life events to affect subsequent outcomes. Adversities include socioeconomic status, violent communities, and normative stressors faced by adolescents such as illness, punishment, and absence of mother. "Risks" is a statistical, probability concept that "predict that a proportion of an at-risk group will experience adverse outcomes" (Gilgun, 1996, p. 396). Although persons in at-risk group are vulnerable to an associated outcome, it does not necessarily predict that a person from an at-risk group will experience it. However, persons in an at-risk group are

vulnerable to the particular outcome. Vulnerability is a concept that can then be applied to persons who belong to the at-risk groups. Not all persons with risk factors experience adverse outcomes. When vulnerable persons do not experience the associated outcome, psychopathology assumes that other factors operate to counter the effects of risk factors.

Several mediators can temper the effects of risk factors, including personal qualities such as a sense of self-efficacy, supportive relationships with adults while growing up, and supportive relationships during adulthood. Factors associated with positive outcomes are referred to as assets. While IQ, high income, physical attractiveness, stable family, safe neighborhoods can be considered assets, if individuals fail to or are unable to use assets to assist them to adapt, cope, or overcome adversity, then the individual assets do not serve as assets. Protective factors are assets that individuals actively use to cope with, adapt to, or overcome vulnerability or risks. Protective factors include harmonious relationships, family who encourage and facilitate the child's ability to cope and who foster positive relationships, and personal qualities of a child. Resilience is a set of behavior and as internalized capacities. It is a concept that refers to the "capacity to maintain feelings of personal integration and sense of competence when confronted by particular adversity" (Gilgun, 1996, p. 398).

The frameworks of CCW, family capital, and human development are valuable approaches to examining the influence of family and community on the educational aspirations and attainment of students of first-generation college graduates. While each of these asset-based frameworks has features that are valuable to understanding factors that influence the post-high school plans of individuals from underrepresented groups, this study uses CCW as its primary theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

To understand the phenomenon of the Filipino teenage girls, now grown women, from 'Ewa Plantation Town who were the first in their families to graduate from college with bachelor's degrees, I examined the influences that their families and community had on their educational and career paths. I also looked at individual traits that were factors in their successes. I used phenomenology and case study approaches to conduct my study. Phenomenology was suitable to gaining insight on how the participants interpreted their lived experiences, constructed their worlds, and ascribed meaning to their experiences. Similar to phenomenology, the case study approach focused on process, meaning, and understanding. I also analyzed my own experiences with the phenomenon and my encounters with the participants using insights from autoethnography. This chapter discusses the methods used in this study. It presents the research design, participants, sampling, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

Qualitative Research, Phenomenology, and Case Study

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research seeks to understand how people make sense of their lives, describe the process of meaning-making, and illuminate how they interpret their experiences. She stated it covers a range of interpretive methods that aim to describe, decode, explain, and reach an understanding of a phenomenon in the social world. Furthermore, Merriam emphasized that the focus is on the process, not the frequency of occurrences. Creswell (2013) pointed out that qualitative research has evolved to give more consideration to the "interpretive nature of inquiry and situating the study within the political, social, and cultural context of the researchers, [as well as] the reflexivity or 'presence' of the researchers in the

accounts they present" (p. 45). He presented a number of common characteristics of qualitative research: 1) research is conducted in a natural setting, 2) researcher is the primary instrument in data collection, 3) multiple methods are used to gather multiple forms of data, 4) complex reasoning involves inductive and deductive logic, 5) research focuses on meaning participants have of a problem, issue, or event, 6) research is conducted within the context or setting of participants' sites, 7) research process is emergent, 8) research is reflective and interpretive, and 9) research is a holistic, multifaceted account of a problem or issue (Creswell, 2013, pp. 45-47).

The combination of phenomenology and case study approaches incorporated the features of qualitative research outlined by Creswell. Each approach also had a particular emphasis that contributed to a fuller picture of the phenomenon. The phenomenological approach focused on the individual participants' accounts and impressions of their direct, personal involvement with the phenomenon—growing up in ‘Ewa and their journey to attaining their college degrees. Since the study concentrated on a clearly defined location and time, I applied the case study approach to understand the experiences of the participants and also the community of ‘Ewa.

A phenomenological study "describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013 p. 76). Creswell highlighted two approaches to phenomenology—hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental, psychological, or empirical, phenomenology. Central to these approaches is the description of the experiences of the participants. Hermeneutic phenomenology is more than a description of the meaning of the lived experiences, but also an interpretive process in which the researcher examines the different texts to understand the meaning. Transcendental, psychological, or empirical phenomenology focuses more on the experiences of participants and not on the researcher's perspective, an approach taken by Moustakas (1994). This study takes the

hermeneutic approach. In addition to describing the meaning participants gave to their experiences, I provide my interpretation of what they said in relation to others' experiences and to my own experiences as a youth growing up in 'Ewa and participating in Sodality.

Similar to phenomenology, case study examines the real-life context or setting. I find this definition of case study to be the most complete:

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 97).

Creswell outlined the seven features of case studies. First, a case study research starts with identifying a specific case. The case must be a concrete entity, such as an individual, a small group, an organization, a partnership, or it could also be a community. For the purposes of this study, the unit of analysis is a group of Sodality members within 'Ewa Plantation Town, bounded geographically and by time (1970s to 1980s). In focusing on the Sodality participants, this study also discusses their families and the community, when doing so sheds light on participants' experiences. Second, being clear about the intent of conducting the study is also crucial. Working with students from underrepresented and socioeconomically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds throughout my professional career, and being a first-generation college graduate, compelled me to examine the factors that influenced the ability of individuals who were first in their families to achieve their educational goals. Third, gaining an in-depth understanding of the case through multiple sources is another important quality. I collected

various forms of qualitative data through interviews of participants, family and/or community members. I also examined documents, and audiovisual materials that enhanced my understanding of the participants lived experiences. Fourth, the selection of how to approach the data analysis in a case study varies. Fifth, a good case study includes a description of the case and is key to the analysis. Themes, issues, or specific situations of the study are identified by the researcher. Sixth, themes or issues might then be organized chronologically or analyzed across cases for similarities and differences. Seventh, conclusions are often presented at the end of case studies about the overall meaning derived from the case(s). In the data analysis section below, I outline the process I used to analyze the data, which is in keeping with procedures used in the phenomenological approach.

Description of Participants–Sample Selection

Sampling Criteria

Participants for the study were selected from a group of women who lived in ‘Ewa Plantation Town during their teenage years in the 1970s and 1980s and were members of Sodality. I used purposeful sampling for this study, which is based on the assumption that the researcher's goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of a problem, issue, or event and, therefore, chooses people, places, or situations that have the greatest ability to advance understanding (Merriam, 2009, p. 77).¹ Patton (2002) sees these selections as cases rich with information pertaining to "issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling" (p. 77). Another word for purposeful sampling is criterion-based sampling, which is the term that LeCompte and Preissle preferred to use and is the best method in understanding several individuals' common or shared experience and thus provides a basis for carefully

¹ Purposeful sampling is also called "purposive sampling".

selecting individuals who experienced the phenomenon in order for the researcher to be able to forge an understanding of their accounts (Creswell, 2013, p. 77, p. 83).

The first step in purposeful, criterion-based sampling is to define the selection criteria or attributes that directly reflect the purpose of the study. I identified the individual cases that matched the items on my criteria list. Sampling criteria consist of variables, characteristics, qualities, and demographics most directly linked to the purpose of the study and thus material to the construction of the sample (Jones, Torres and Arminion, 2006). A range of demographics and characteristics were essential to help elucidate the factors that contributed to or hindered the participants' educational attainment. The variation was important to understand the lives of the participants from multiple perspectives.

My criteria were the following: subjects who were of Filipino ethnicity, with neither parent having a college degree, lived in 'Ewa Plantation since they were in elementary school, and were members of Sodality. Although the participants in this study were from a small population of Filipino females who met the criteria, the backgrounds of the participants varied in generation status in Hawai'i, parents' birthplace, the village of residence, and the date they were involved with Sodality.

Utilizing the power of the Internet and the social media Facebook, I reconnected with former members of Sodality, their family, and friends. Within 24 hours of creating a Facebook group, seventeen had joined; two days later, the number of members increased to 31.² There are currently 40 members. There is a section in Facebook to post information about one's self that a member is prompted to provide, as well as other details of one's life that one would like to

² A *Facebook* "group" is a closed or private space for small groups of people to communicate about common interests, share updates, and chat online.

include in the profile. Most profiles included details on school attended, hometown, workplace, and the current residences. I perused the profiles of the individual members and identified those who met my criteria. I was familiar with key people in the Facebook community, as well as the network of former 'Ewa Plantation residents, who helped facilitate my access to participants.

Of those that I identified as meeting the essential core criteria, I sent a letter inviting them to participate. The letter explained the purpose of the study, time commitment, structure of the interview, and its voluntary nature. In our meeting, I reviewed these points with the participants, as well as the "Benefits and Risks" and "Confidentiality and Privacy." Participation in the study was strictly voluntary and I reiterated this when I met with the participants and had them sign a written consent form.³

Gaining Access, Building Trust, Rapport

An important step in the data collection process is to gain access to the people or places to study, and establish rapport with participants. Although there was some distance in time and space between high school days and this study, and although I had long been out of contact with many individuals since my teen years, lifelong bonds endured, by virtue of our shared experiences as part of a community, ethnic group, church, and social network. My position as an insider was an advantage in gaining access and establishing rapport.⁴ Previously living in the same community and participating in the same youth church group, I was well-acquainted with potential participants and had strong ties to those who were in Sodality during the years I was part of it. This made it easier to establish rapport, which was integral to the interviewing

³ The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Human Studies Program reviewed and approved the study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants, which clears the path for the collection of data.

⁴ Seidman (2006) defines rapport as "getting along with each other, a harmony with, a conformity to, an affinity for one another" (p. 96).

relationship and the primary method of data collection in my study. I anticipated certain sensitive issues such as gender, sexuality, religion, and race could have been uncomfortable for me and participants, but this did not turn out to be the case.

Kanuha (2000) discussed the challenges of "insider," "indigenous," or "native" researcher conducting research with communities or identity groups of which one is a member. According to Kanuha, "The most critical aspect of the native researcher role is the need to distance [oneself] from the project, the participants, and indeed even the process of studying one's own people" (p. 442). She found it necessary to maintain distance in her research where the deeply personal, and even painful, life histories of the participants mirrored her own experiences and made it difficult to focus on the interview process, responses, and narratives of the study participants. She did her best to avoid having the distraction of her own reflection on similar events interfere with her study. In contrast to her efforts, in my analysis after the interviews were completed, I used insights from the methodology of autoethnography to relate my own experiences to those of my study participants. On the other hand, in the interview process, I kept in mind Seidman's advice. "Although the shared assumptions that come from common backgrounds may make it easier to build rapport, interviewing requires interviewers to have enough distance to enable them to ask real questions and to explore, not to share, assumptions" (Seidman, 2006, p. 100).

I was confronted with striking a delicate balance as a member of the group and as an insider researcher. I monitored this by writing my reflections using Penzu, an online journal. I used Kanuha's three strategies to mediate the duality of the insider-outsider role as a researcher: 1) ask participants to clarify or elaborate in cases when they would presume that I know what they are talking about and say something like "you know," 2) vigorously pursue exceptions when a narrative or code appeared constant among participants, and 3) consider ways to expand the

definitions of the researcher–researched relationship and to explore the strengths and liabilities of this relationship. At times the participants and I became collaborators in reflecting not only on our lived experiences but the significance of the study and potential benefits and future projects. However, I was mindful of Seidman's (2006) advice about balancing the rapport I built during the interview to be consistent with the relationship I anticipated to have with the participants after the study was concluded. My relationship will most likely be sustained with the participants and community beyond the completion of my dissertation.

Conducting the study gave me the opportunity to reenter the community and peer network. Negotiating the appropriate level of rapport, as a peer and insider researcher, initially posed a challenge and I was hyper-alert to biases and interactions with the participants that could impact the dynamics of the relationship. Just as important as gaining access was bringing the study to a conclusion while being alert to the shift in the level of intimacy in the interviewer-interviewee relationship.

Size of Sample

Two things must be considered in determining the size of the sample when collecting extensive details about the phenomenon: sufficiency and saturation. There must be an adequate number to reflect the diversity of participants that make up the population so those outside of the sample can relate to the experiences of those who are part of it. Sample sizes for phenomenological studies have ranged from 1 to 325 participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). I interviewed eight women with bachelor's degrees who were members of Sodality. They were in seventh to 12th grades, or 12 to 18 years old, at the time they were Sodalists. This study highlights the lived experiences of five of the participants who were first in their families to graduate with bachelor's degrees. Three of the remaining participants provided valuable insights.

However, two were not the first in their families to earn bachelor's degrees, and one was involved with Sodality after the 1980s, beyond the period of the study. I included experiences of older and younger siblings when the stories of younger siblings provided insights and clarity to study participants' experiences.

I also had a conversation with a Sodalist who was the first in her family to obtain a bachelor's degree. However, because I was unable to connect with her during the data collection period, and our discussion was not recorded like the others, I did not include her in the study. In addition, I interviewed a former Sodalist who attended university but did not find nursing compatible with her interests, thus did not complete college.

In addition to the study participants, I interviewed the two Sodality advisors, who provided useful information about the purpose of Sodality and the values and practices they tried to instill in the Sodalists. They also shared their impressions of 'Ewa.

I reached saturation when common themes began to emerge from my data, and I was comfortable in being able to answer my research questions. I gleaned common themes from the lived experiences of the participants who were the focus of the study, supported by my other structured interviews, as well as my one unstructured interview.

Data Collection

I collected data through these approaches: 1) in-depth interviews, 2) published sources and archival records that are visual or narrative representations of the Sodalists' journey and 'Ewa, and 3) observations recorded in field notes. The structure for the interviews in this study was developed using Seidman's method that combined life-history interviewing and focused, in-depth interviewing. I tested a list of open-ended questions that I posed to two former Sodality members. I found myself reading the questions, which made me feel constrained in my

interactions with the participants. The University of Hawai'i Center for Oral History (2011) cautions this could happen when using a questionnaire of completely phrased questions, and to avoid it since it can "create a formal, uncomfortable atmosphere" (p. 8). I made adjustments and developed a list of topics to be discussed, which was more appropriate and conducive to promoting a natural flow of dialogue that the participants and I were accustomed to in our regular interactions. This allowed me to actively listen and follow-up on topics raised by the participants.

The interviews were one-on-one and semi-structured to allow for flexible conversation, which I conducted over five months. I inquired about the "concrete details" of the participants' lived experiences and asked them to reflect on what it meant to them. At the beginning of the study, I tried to maintain a strict distance between participants and myself, as the researcher. However, I found the formality resulted in our interaction being artificial. Starting with the third participant interview, I referred to the interview guide only to make sure that I covered the topics, which proved to be more effective. The interviews were from 1 1/2 to 4 1/2 hours in length for the first interviews and the follow-up interviews for two of the participants were from 30 to 45 minutes. Because of my shared history growing up in 'Ewa, membership in Sodality and Immaculate Conception, and connection to overlapping social networks, there was already mutual trust and natural rapport—facilitating participants' readiness to share their experiences upon our first meetings and making multiple sessions unnecessary. After the first two interviews, I recognized that one interview with each participant was sufficient, especially because the participants were interested in dedicating more than the agreed upon 90 minutes.

The interviews were held at mutually agreeable locations to ensure ease of sharing information and speaking. Most of the time we met at restaurants or cafes, as well as a classroom.

I also conducted telephone and video conference calls with those living in other states. One participant was only available after 11:00 pm because of the demands of her work, family, and doctoral studies. I interviewed one of the advisors at her home. Participants were surprisingly candid in sharing their experiences, including ones that were of a sensitive nature. I recorded the interviews using a digital audio recorder and mobile phone. At the end of the sessions, I documented my observations and impressions in my field notes. To minimize personal bias, I reflected in my journal the research process, the setting, the participants' non-verbal language, our interaction, and my own insights and emotions. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, which I then shared with the participants for accuracy of their statements. The data from the study were kept in a secure location. Upon completion of my research project, I will erase the audio recordings. To protect the privacy of the participants, I used pseudonyms.

I used Microsoft Word and Excel to organize, store, and analyze the data. Copies of the digital audio recordings of the interviews were saved on the computer for easy access and management of data. Photographs and archival materials were converted into electronic files.

Data Analysis

The most important thing in analyzing the data is to remember to tackle it inductively rather than deductively (Seidman, 2006). Phenomenology has structured methods of analysis. Creswell (2013) took Moustakas's (1994, 136) modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis and outlined a simplified form of it, which guided my analysis. These are the steps that Creswell outlined: 1) describe personal experiences with the phenomenon, 2) develop a list of significant statements, 3) take the significant statements and organize into themes or "meaning units," 4) write a "textural description" of "what" the participants experienced with the phenomenon, 5) write a "structural description" of how the experience occurred, and 6) pull

together the textural and structural descriptions and write a composite description—"essence" of the participants' experiences (pp. 193-194).

Before conducting the interviews, I reflected on my own experiences about the phenomenon. This process helped to make me aware of my viewpoint and circumstances so that I would be prepared to suspend beliefs that could introduce personal biases during the interviews and later, in the analysis and interpretation. This is called *epoche* and bracketing is a technique to facilitate it, whereby a researcher "set[s] aside experiences as much as possible to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). Bracketing has been applied in various ways. Lavasseur's interpretation of bracketing as a way of cultivating curiosity is a sound approach (Creswell, 2013, p. 83). As Lavasseur suggested, I visualized two bookends that kept my knowledge and experiences within, setting aside understandings, assumptions, and biases to expand my knowledge. It is difficult to completely bracket one's personal experiences and block any assumptions, which I discovered in the first interview I conducted. I realized my interpretation of a participants' comment that was made years earlier was incorrect because of an assumption I made based on my own views. Encountering the situation early in the data collection was a valuable lesson that underscored the importance of striking a balance between bracketing my personal experience that might introduce bias with drawing on my own experiences to illuminate and effectively cultivate a greater understanding of the phenomenon.

I reviewed the transcripts of the interview data as they were completed and got a general sense of the participants' lived experiences. Once all the interviews were completed, I analyzed the transcripts more thoroughly and identified the major organizing ideas and marked the text, wrote memos along the margins as starting points for reflecting on the material. In

phenomenological research the type of information a qualitative researcher might search for includes individual experiences and the context of those experiences. Next, I generated an inventory of significant statements found in the interviews or other data sources about how the participants experienced the phenomenon. This process of "horizontalization of data" was useful to developing the data into codes or themes. Researchers have diverse views of using preexisting or prior codes to guide the coding process. Coding strategies can range on a continuum from "prefigured " categories to emergent categories. Analyzing data using prefigured codes limit analysis to these set of codes rather than expanding the range to reflect the views of participants.

After I aggregated the data, I classified the text or data and looked for categories, themes or dimensions of information. As a general rule, five to seven themes are identified during the analysis of the data. Themes "are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea" (Creswell, 2013, p. 186). The significant statements I identified were grouped into larger "meaning units" or themes, which overlapped with sources of Yosso's six forms of community cultural.

Interpretation of the data entailed conceptualizing beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data. It involved making sense of the data and reflecting on the lessons learned. Adopting Seidman's (2006) suggestions, I examined the data for common threads among the experiences of the participants, reflected on plausible explanations for the connections, and ascertained how my understanding was enlarged by the data collected. I wrote descriptions of "what" the participants experienced as the first in their families to earn bachelor's degrees and "how" the experiences happened. I presented the essence of the participants' experience as a narrative.

Analyzing and interpreting the participants' lived experiences primarily through the lenses of community cultural wealth, I generated a profile of each participant. I also examined the phenomenon using the case study approach to understand the relationships between the participants' experiences and the community of 'Ewa, the church, and Sodality. Drawing from autoethnography, I practiced reflexivity in collecting and analyzing data. Examining the participants' stories alongside my own experiences and knowledge of the phenomenon enabled me to comprehend the meaning of the participants' lived experiences more fully. It was also instrumental in assisting me to monitor any biases and assumptions that I had.

Using Insights from Autoethnography

I analyzed my own experiences with the phenomenon and my encounters with the participants in this study using insights from autoethnography. I captured, in written form, as notes or journal reflections of my thoughts and reactions to interviews and participants. As a former member of Sodality, I have a unique perspective that I contributed to illustrating the aspects of our common experiences of pursuing and attaining our college degrees.

The particular approach associated with autoethnography that aligns best with my study is *reflexive ethnography*. In reflexive ethnography, the focus is primarily on the culture or subculture and the "authors use their own experiences in the culture reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 740). A researcher's personal experience is significant mainly in how it illuminates the culture being studied. Autoethnography has become a valuable tool for researchers and practitioners who work with diverse populations in education and health and human services settings. This research approach is friendly to researchers and readers; fosters cultural understanding of self and others; and promote greater understanding of self and others.

Pitard's (2015) structured vignette analysis model provided a valuable guide for analyzing the interview, in particular these three steps: context, anecdote, and reflexivity. "Truth is negotiated through dialogue and the context of that dialogue is vital to the shaping of the data" (Pitard, 2015, p. 5). By reflecting on the interviews in conjunction with my experiences and understanding of the phenomenon, I was better able to grasp the meaning of the participants' lived experiences. A narrative anecdote can return the researcher to a point before reflection or the written word has had a chance to impact the recall and restore contact with the lived experience. Van Manen gave seven suggestions for gathering narrative material or for editing appropriate lived experience descriptions into exemplary anecdotes. An anecdote should have these features: 1) very short and simple; 2) usually describes a single incident; 3) begins close to the central moment of the experience; 4) includes important concrete details; 5) often contains several quotes (what was said, done and so on); 6) closes quickly after the climax or when the incident has passed; and 7) often has an effective or "punchy" last line (Pitard, 2015).

"Reflexivity in research is the researchers' acknowledgement of and response to the impact of their own history and life issues on their interactions with their research participants" (Pitard, 2015, p. 6). Practicing reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis process allowed me to contemplate my interactions with the participants and be mindful of how it affects our relationships. It was a valuable way to monitor any bias or assumptions that I had.

Validation and Evaluation

Creswell (2013) posed two fundamental and interrelated questions regarding his discussion on validation and evaluation in qualitative research: 1) "Is the account valid, and by whose standards?" and 2) "How do we evaluate the quality of a research study?" (p. 243). There are different perspectives on the importance of validation in qualitative research, its definition,

terms to describe it, and procedures for establishing it. The perspectives range from viewing qualitative validation in terms of quantitative equivalents to the other end of the spectrum as something that is unimportant.

Creswell outlined his own position on validation and described accepted strategies that researchers can apply to document the "accuracy" of their studies. He viewed "validation" as the attempt to assess the "accuracy" of the findings. The combination of extensive amount of time a researcher spends in the field, the closeness of the researcher to the participants in the study, and the detailed thick description that is generated all "add to the value or accuracy of a study," which Creswell considered to be a distinct strength of qualitative research. He preferred to use the term "validation" to emphasize the process rather than "verification," which has quantitative connotations, or historical terms such as "trustworthiness" or "authenticity." There are eight validation strategies frequently used by qualitative researchers to ensure the collection of valid information: 1) prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, 2) triangulation by using multiple and different data sources to corroborate evidence, 3) peer debriefing to provide external check on research process by colleagues(s) who have impartial view of the study, 4) negative case analysis that involves searching for and discussing elements of the data that do not support or that appear to contradict patterns or explanations that are emerging from data analysis, 5) clarifying research bias, 6) member checking solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations, 7) rich, thick description, and 8) external audits allow an external consultant, the auditor, to examine both the process and the product of the account (Creswell, 2013, pp. 250-251). Polkinghorne presented the closest discussion of validation

criteria for phenomenological studies. He asked, "Does the general structural description provide an accurate portrait of common features and structural connections that are manifest in the examples collected?" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 57).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues in qualitative research can surface at each stage of the research process. I made sure participants were treated according to the fundamental ethical principles and guidelines of the Belmont Report for the protection of human subjects and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Human Studies Program: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Although there were no identifiable risks for participating in the study, I took steps to ensure that all participants were treated with respect and courtesy, and assured that they had the liberty to withdraw from the study at any point if they desired.

Limitations of the Study

Phenomenological research is an excellent approach to gather rich, in-depth descriptions. The study produced valuable insights, but due to the small sample size the findings are not generalizable; it is limited to this one community and specific to a small group of Filipino women's experiences that was bounded by time and place. In phenomenology, the researcher's interpretation is instrumental, and bias might be introduced.

CHAPTER 4

GABRIELA

Gabriela is the oldest of four children in her family and has blazed the trail for her younger siblings. Her own aspirations were formed by her father's sense of responsibility, which propelled him to come to Hawai'i as a contract laborer for the sugar plantation. The hardships he faced and sacrifices he made is a familiar story shared by those who came to work on Hawai'i's sugar plantations. He persevered and never lost sight of his desire for a better life for his mother and sisters in the Philippines and subsequently his own in Hawai'i. This ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future is what Yosso calls aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Gabriela's aspirations intertwined with her parents', and have been embedded in her psyche. It is the foundation on which two other prevailing capitals, familial and social, have been fundamental to her journey and successes.

Her father's story of survival is part of the family lore and is evocative of immigrant families' knowledge and experiences that is told in Gabriela's nuclear and extended family, or 'ohana. The sharing and retelling of these stories have been critical factors in sustaining Gabriela's aspirations, as well as that of her younger sister Alhambra, whom I also interviewed. The sisters have internalized the story of how their father's older brother had left home when their father was still an adolescent and their grandfather had died so it was up to their father to take care of the family and he became the father figure. Unfortunately, on his first day of work in a nearby city, Japan invaded the Philippines and seized and halted all forms of transportation. His attempt to provide for his family was thwarted even before getting a chance to start his job. Japan drove out the Americans and the Philippines were left to fight on their own until the United States returned in 1945 to liberate the country. Gabriela and Alhambra both mentioned

this fact and it appears to be an important piece of their father's story of struggle. Although this chapter is focused on Gabriela, who was first in her family to attend college, from time to time I also discuss Alhambra's relevant experiences because of the sisters' close relationship with each other. The war exacted a high price and caused immense damage to the Philippines, which had a direct impact on the lives of Gabriela's father and relatives.

Gabriela's father had a cousin who returned to the Philippines after his stint as a contract laborer for one of the sugar plantations in Hawai'i. It was fortuitous that her father's cousin did not have any desire to return to the islands, paving the way for her father to come to Hawai'i at the age of 25 under his cousin's name and seek economic opportunities in order to support his family and send his sisters to school. He settled in 'Ewa and worked for the plantation. Only upon serving in the Korean War did his real identity come to light when the U.S. Government discovered who he was in the process of conducting a background check related to awards he was being considered to receive. Gabriela shared that when government officials asked her father why he impersonated his cousin, her father replied that his own father died at a young age and he had to support his mother and all his younger sisters so he came to Hawai'i to work. Upon his story being verified as truthful, Gabriela's father was ultimately given the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart. More importantly, he was able to reclaim his name and legally travel between Hawai'i and the Philippines. The length to which Gabriela's father was willing to risk and sacrifice for his family is an underlying theme that fuels her and Alhambra's aspirations, a key source of aspirational capital, as well as familial capital.

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*My father and mother came from Ilocos Norte, the same home province of Gabriela's parents. My parents were born in 1937 and 1940, respectively, just before the United States*

*entered World War II. Both lost their fathers when they were just toddlers, my paternal grandfather due to natural causes and my maternal grandfather at the hands of marajapons or Filipino Japanese sympathizers. According to my mother and maternal grandmother, Mamang Celestina, my maternal grandfather was the lieutenant of their village and sustained internal bleeding from being beaten by the marajapones. War under any circumstances is a difficult situation. To be widowed, with young children like Mamang and my paternal grandmother, Nana Apolonia, was even more so. This was compounded for Mamang who was pregnant with her youngest child. Against this backdrop of great instability in the country and family loss, the two women faced adversity in their own way with a strength belied by their petite stature. No taller than 4' 7", they commanded the respect and confidence of their families and friends. Mamang did so with her boundless energy and the assistance she provided to relatives who needed help with any, and all, domestic activities. She also was not shy to give advice and was very vocal. Through her, I came to know the story of my maternal grandfather and maternal side of the family – of her great love for her husband and sadness in losing her oldest daughter when she was just a teenager. Upon the death of her husband, Mamang and her children lived with her husband's sister whose own husband was working in Hawai'i. Mamang was responsible for taking care of much of the household and the children.*

*In contrast, Nana was more reserved but her unshakeable faith in God and empathy could be felt by anyone in her presence and conveyed more loudly than any words the grace that she embodied. Everyone who knew her would attest they never heard her complain or utter an unkind word. Nana survived in the same way she did in raising her younger siblings upon the death of her own parents preceding her marriage to my grandfather, with unwavering devotion to her family and acceptance of the realities of a life that was laden with hardships. She grew*

*vegetables and sold kankanen, Filipino pastries, to make ends meet. Her devotion to her family equaled that of Mamang's. My parents' and my own aspirations emanated from the hardships my grandmothers endured and their devotion to their families. The sense of duty to take care and provide for their families is a common trait shared by both Gabriela's and my father. Although my father had an older sister, he was the oldest boy of his three siblings, and like Gabriela's father, he assumed the role of father figure. Caring for family and putting others' interests above one's self was a core value that was a source of familial capital.*



Plantation work provided a means of livelihood but it was undoubtedly hard labor. Gabriela's father worked various jobs at the plantation, including killing weeds with poison and cutting sugarcane. For extra money, he worked in the boiler room, putting coal or wood into a big boiler. According to her sister Alhambra, their mother said it was so hot that a protective material had to be doused with water and used to cover him.



*Upon arriving in Hawai'i, my father did not start working for the plantation right away. His first job was as a dishwasher in the dining hall at Pearl Harbor Naval Base. He had a difficult time transitioning from farming in the fields to washing dishes in the confines of the cafeteria and not having control over his own work. Before working for Oahu Sugar Company, he considered returning to the Philippines. To supplement the family income, especially with a child on the way a year after our arrival in Hawai'i, my father worked several part-time jobs at a large department store, bakery, and yard service. We did not have a car in the early years so at midnight after he finished his job at the department store, he would ride his blue Schwinn bike from one end of Waipahu to the other end where we lived. My father's time working in the field*

*was short-lived. The plantation company had a vocational correspondence training program and he was selected for the plumbing apprentice course soon after he was hired. Although it was not a glamorous vocation, he eventually got his certification as a journeyman plumber, then his contractor's license. Being a plumber provided greater economic opportunity and stability. As I scrubbed his work denim jeans to remove the soil before throwing it in the wash, I was reminded of the sacrifices he and my mother were making for our immediate and extended family in Hawai'i and the Philippines. He had a job offer to work at Pearl Harbor but I begged him not to take it because I did not want to move from 'Ewa, and neither did my mother. He listened to our entreaties. Taking the job at Pearl Harbor might have led to greater economic opportunities, but the social network and support that the 'Ewa community provided in caring for each other, including my family was immeasurable.*

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Tears welled up in Alhambra's eyes and her voice quivered as she told me that whenever she is in a stressful situation, she recalls her father's stories and thinks to herself: "Why am I complaining? This is nothing compared to what he went through. So I think, you know, [as] part of our plantation upbringing we were exposed to hard work and all of that so I cannot complain because [other] people always have [it] worse." Alhambra observed her parents, as well as other immigrants, "value education a whole lot more because they know what it can do to open up opportunities," she said. Being exposed to hard work and hard times fostered resiliency and an expectation of being able to overcome any difficult situation. Her father's efforts enabled one of his sisters to become a nurse and another one to become a teacher. Gabriela and Alhambra witnessed their parents working hard for their family. They were determined to send their children to college. "I knew I was gonna go to some kind of college" upon graduation from high

school, Gabriela said. Their parents held up their Aunties who were professions as role models. According to Alhambra they and other relatives constantly said, "you got to go to college, study hard." Therefore, the message was reinforced and it was just assumed that going to college was in their future. Such was the familial capital with which Gabriela, Alhambra, and I grew up.



For my younger brother and me, it was firmly established that we were to take full advantage of the educational opportunities that were available to us. My parents mandated that we would go to college and we never questioned it. It was drilled into us as early as elementary school. I was fully aware that a college education was a privilege that was not afforded to my parents. They and my grandmothers would put it in the context that we were napanglaw, of humble means and had little material wealth. Attaining a college degree would allow a better life of less hardship than they experienced. The pressure to excel in our studies and other pursuits was immense.

Being born in the Philippines and living there until I was seven-years-old, I grasped what it meant to do with only the bare necessities. I experienced first hand living in a bamboo house, doing without plumbing or electricity in our village, and riding on the back of our nuang (carabao or water buffalo) or in the ulnas, a sled with walls on four sides that would be hitched to the nuang, to farm with my father. I enjoyed going to the fields with my father. However, I was aware of where my family stood along the social hierarchy and the subtle social class differences even within my own family. My father's sister was married to an attorney and his younger brother was in college. I found this to be unfair since I perceived my father to be very intelligent. On my maternal side of the family my mother had relatives in Hawai'i, giving them access to remittances and more resources. My parents had hoped to go to college but in their first year of

post-secondary education their plans were interrupted. Rather than succumb to my grandmother's wish to have my mother marry a man who was much older than she, my parents eloped. As a result, a relative halted assistance to help my mother with tuition and what income my father had was diverted to meet our family's needs.

Although my mother worked in the municipal office, it was still a struggle to start a family and tensions persisted over my mother's defiance of her mother and getting adjusted to her in-laws. I was too young to know it at the time, but in the back of my mind I wanted to fulfill my parents' dreams and redeem them in the eyes of my mother's family. Whether it was real or perceived, I had this impression of my father having to prove himself even when we lived in Hawai'i. I felt compelled to make amends for him and my mother. This appears unlikely at such a young age, but I was a serious child and always felt a sense of responsibility for others and was attuned to inequities.

Commitment to community is a type of subtle act of resistance described by Delgado Bernal (2010). My growing consciousness of the inequities around me made me feel uncomfortable. An early instance is when I was selected to be part of the Brownies in the Philippines during my first year in school. The term Brownie referred to Girl Scouts ages seven to nine years old. Standing on school grounds of my school among the other Brownies that were selected, I noticed that the other girls came from families who were better off financially than my family. One lived in a two-story house made of concrete, which was an indication of her family's higher economic status. That experience was followed by other observations on our ocean journey from Philippines to Hawai'i as we stopped at different ports. I was exposed to the rickshaw pulled by men transporting passengers. At one of the ports of call, sampans, small flat-bottom boats, surrounded our ship as we entered the harbor. Adults and children begged those

on our ship and dove in the water for coins that were tossed overboard to them. The encounters were fleeting but left lasting impressions. I was driven to pursue higher education not just to have a better life for my family, but also to enable me to work for a more just society.



In the history of the Philippines, religion served both to subjugate and liberate the people. Spain colonized the Philippines and ruled for 400 years. The Roman Catholic Church furthered Spain's domination of the country but in 1986 played a vital role in the People Power Revolution that led to the downfall of the then-president and dictator of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos. Religion and faith have continued to be an enduring part of the day-to-day life for Filipinos in the Philippines and Hawai'i. Catholicism and the church were essential to the lives of Filipinos who lived in 'Ewa Plantation Town. Immaculate Conception Church was an important force in the daily activities of the community. The church played a major role in Gabriela's and Alhambra's formative years and was the underpinning for two core forms of capital—familial and social.

Growing up in the plantation community of 'Ewa, Gabriela was surrounded by the interconnected support system of her extended family, church, and community. Buffered from the power, economic, and social structures of the plantation that placed Filipinos at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy, she said, "I don't think I was at a disadvantage at all, to be honest." She knew that her family did not have a lot of money for her to pursue expensive hobbies or lessons for enrichment activities, but her parents provided something significantly more priceless—stability. My parents "were strict, but it was a stable home" she said. The children were not starving and did not have all the new clothes that they would have wanted nor could they dine out after every high school basketball game but she does not remember giving much

thought to any of her schoolmates from wealthier families. "I think it's because we never knew better," Gabriela reflected. She was not aware there were kids from wealthy families who were taking enrichment classes and traveling to exotic places during the summer.

Gabriela and Alhambra felt fortunate to have been born and raised in a close-knit community enriched and nurtured by the plantation lifestyle and people. Examining the closeness of the 'Ewa plantation community through the eyes of one of the Sodality advisers who lived three miles away outside of 'Ewa, revealed to me something I had taken for granted. She described her co-Sodality adviser and the rest of the people from 'Ewa who went to church as friendly and welcoming. When her husband died, they reached out to her and showed up to express their condolences and to pray. "I never had that experience where they would give up their regular life to come and pray. . . . I was so touched," she said. Prayers to request for special graces and petitions for someone who has recently died is an important practice among Filipino Catholics and Christians. Family and friends would gather and pray upon someone's death and the novena, which consists of nine days of prayer, would commence nine days prior to the burial and culminate on the day of internment. For many, paying your last respects is equally, if not even more, important than significant events like weddings, baptisms, or birthdays. Comfort and support to those grieving is extended beyond one's own relatives, friends, or neighbors to those who are more remotely connected such as someone from the same hometown in the Philippines or a distant relative of a friend.

In many ways, the entire village was practically part of Gabriela's extended family. Her neighbors were her *ninangs*, the Filipino word for godmothers, and the older kids on her street were like her older brothers and sisters. Gabriela said, "everybody knew each other, and everybody else's kids were your kids." Alhambra went even farther and said, "The whole town

was like your family. Literally, everybody knew each other." She said, members of the community shared the same experiences and could relate to each other. There was little need to venture out of the community with basic services provided by the post office and credit union, and groceries and dry goods available through the Ewa Shopping Basket. Being the only one-stop shopping place, the store was a central point where the community came into regular contact with each other.

Multigenerational, multifamily households were common among Filipinos in Ewa and were mutually beneficial as everyone shared what resources they had, helped with the chores, and cared for each other. Families learned to manage with the limited space and resources, which had its advantages. Living in such close proximity taught individuals to be cognizant of other people's needs, be adaptable, and charitable. In Gabriela's household, a grandfather figure lived with her family in their three-bedroom, one bath home in Fernandez Village.

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*Similar to Gabriela's family, my grandmothers lived with us. Mamang helped raise my brother when my mother returned to the workforce, and there were always relatives staying with us as they settled in Hawai'i or before moving on to the continental U.S. Shared housing was an immense resource to recent immigrants. I asked my father once what he thought was the greatest challenge that he experienced as an immigrant and for new immigrants. Without hesitation he said "housing."*

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Gabriela's family lived simply like others in the community. Gardening was part of the livelihood of the plantation community, a popular pastime and means of cutting costs. Her father

had a garden and would water the plants and tend to his garden when he came home from work. He never sold the vegetables and would give it to their relatives in town who did not have their own gardens.



My father also planted a variety of vegetables that he and my family tended. Staples included eggplant, tomato, bittermelon, string beans, squash and papaya. My favorite was the garlic and onion he planted one year that grew to be taller than my brother who was about four-years-old at the time and bulbs that were as big as an apple. The marrungay and fruit trees were scattered throughout the yard. Fruit trees in the back included grapefruit and papaya trees; in the front were the mango, mountain apple, and star apple trees. Come harvest time, we would keep some for ourselves and share the rest with neighbors, friends, and relatives. They always reciprocated by sharing their own harvest, special dish, or other treats.



Growing up in 'Ewa engendered in Gabriela and Alhambra an understanding and appreciation for the Filipino culture. Their parents spoke to them in *Ilokano*, the language spoken in their parents' province of Ilocos Norte. Gabriela and her siblings learned the language, enabling them to communicate with their parents. At school, Alhambra remembered being pulled out of her regular class to attend Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) classes in kindergarten. "I must have had a Filipino accent because I remember one of my neighborhood friends would correct me when I would pronounce certain words such as lipstick and curtain," recalled Alhambra. She would pronounce these words "lee-piss-tick" and "core-tin," respectively. Her friend was also Filipino but because her parents had been in Hawai'i longer, and she had an older sister, they had a better grasp of English. "Because most of my good friends were from the

plantation, we all could understand Ilokano, so we had that same history," she stated matter-of-factly. The intellectual and social skills Gabriela and Alhambra developed through communicating in multiple languages facilitated linguistic capital. Their experiences enriched their abilities to function and adjust to a variety of forms of communication.



Only having completed three months in the first-grade in the Philippines, my knowledge of English was limited to the words "yes" and "no" and the phrases "what is your name" and "how old are you." Unlike Alhambra, I did not have a friend who tutored me. Standing in front of the class and being expected to speak on whatever topic was assigned, I could only hold myself erect and refrain from crying. Like Alhambra, I was pulled out of class to attend remedial, TESL classes. If not for my parents advocating for me to remain in the first grade and disregarding the school's instructions to speak only in English to me, I would have been demoted to kindergarten and more likely become much less proficient in Ilokano.

The following academic year, I had caught up with my second grade class after having attended summer school. However, I still had what I considered to be the most distinguishable characteristic of my immigrant background, a "Filipino accent," which marked me as being fresh off the boat (FOB), a derogatory term for a recent immigrant. Someone who was not local or American enough and, therefore, not fully belonging, I avoided inquiries about my nationality, which was a proxy for ethnicity, and my citizenship. These were matters I kept to myself. I did not have any peers or relatives who were immigrants with whom I felt comfortable in discussing how I felt. Furthermore, I did not want to disrespect my parents, seeing their sacrifices and how hard they worked. By calling them Mom and Dad, rather than the Ilokano honorifics that I had

addressed them in Ilokano, Nanang and Tatang, this is exactly what I did. I tried to abandon the language of my parents and my first language in order to assimilate and resisted speaking it in the school setting.

As I grew older, I made the decision to think in English and trained myself to do so upon hearing that this is an indication of proficiency in a language. My family, especially my grandmothers who spoke limited English, continued to speak to me in Ilokano. For the most part, I would communicate with my grandmothers in Ilokano but spoke with my parents in English. I did not completely abandon my first language so I did not completely lose my ability to speak it. To be expected, my parents were not pleased and insisted that I speak in Ilokano but I resisted. Attempts to shed my Filipino accent and first language may have spared me from being embarrassed in public but it created tension between my parents and me, and within myself. According to Anzuldua (1987, p. 59), "ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity. . . . Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself." Gabriela and Alhambra did not feel stigmatized by their linguistic identity. Alhambra felt proud in her ability to speak Ilokano. I struggled with my immigrant status, which was tied to my language and ethnic identity. Perhaps I would have viewed my ability to speak Ilokano as an asset if I had grown up in the enclave of Filipino and plantation community of 'Ewa from the time I arrived in Hawai'i. In 'Ewa, I felt a sense of acceptance and belonging, which was reassuring as I struggled to define who I was as I moved in and out of the worlds that I occupied – home, school, and community. This space, between tangible and intangible, as well as between and within multiple identities, is called liminal (Rendon, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014).

My family was very strict with me and I rarely went to the neighbor's house to play. Up until my sophomore year in high school when I became involved with Sodality, the only friends

and family I visited regularly were our back door neighbors. My parents were so protective that they had my brother accompany me whenever I met the other neighborhood teenagers at the park and sometimes even to church activities.

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Gabriela and Alhambra's had a lot more latitude to explore the neighborhood and develop friendships. The entire neighborhood was the kids' playground as they spent most of their time outdoors. They played hide-and-seek around the village on their bikes and created their own American Skating Club, complete with membership cards and rules for the street roller-skating enthusiasts, including wearing red, white, and blue in keeping with the name of their group. "We all got roller skates and so every afternoon you could hear about six to seven of us going up and down the street on our roller skates," said Gabriela. Besides these recreational activities, they also liked to role play various professionals, including a teacher.

One summer the youth ran their own "summer school." The older kids role-played being teachers and the younger ones, mostly their siblings, were the students. They were moved to do this upon seeing in the school trash bin unused worksheets that were thrown away at the end of the year. Gabriela recalled "We'd go 'cockroach' all the worksheets, bring it home, and then we would use that when we played." Lessons included a very informative session on malnutrition. This is how Alhambra was introduced to malnutrition. She learned about what it was, how it developed, and areas in the world that it was most prevalent, such as Africa. "I was like, 'wow.' That was the first time I ever remember being like introduced to that [malnutrition]," she said. She found it interesting and different.

Lessons were held in the backyard patio of a neighbor's house or at their own home. Three areas were set-up as classrooms for different subjects. The day was semi-structured and

started with lessons at around 8:30 am or 9:00 am until Mr. Chun came around in the silver *manapua* truck around lunch time selling food. Everybody always bought *manapua*, a steamed bun with red-colored pork filling, or noodles from him. Physical Education (PE) followed lunch and they played dodge ball and other games in the yard. The father of one of their friends loved to dance and taught the youth dances to contemporary songs. From Gabriela's and Alhambra's accounts, the summer school experience was rich in newfound knowledge and skills gained. The older youth demonstrated initiative, resourcefulness, and organizational skills, and management skills in implementing the summer program. Somewhat surprised that the younger kids actually paid attention, Gabriela said, "It was funny because they actually listened to us. They would do the work and they would play the part of students." The peer network was a valuable source of both familial capital and social capital, and the skills they acquired were basis for navigational capital.

The close interaction, similar practices, and shared values and beliefs amongst the people in 'Ewa formed a strong sense of community identity. The Filipino family cultural practices, traditions, values, and beliefs were closely aligned with the community's due to the high percentage of Filipinos living in 'Ewa. Traditional Filipino cultural practices were perpetuated by the families and the broader community. Unlike my earlier experience living in Waipahu, I did not feel as tremendous a disconnect between the Filipino and more Western or local culture, or an apparent distinction in social class among the Filipinos in 'Ewa. Speaking Ilokano or any of the other Filipino languages, showcasing Filipino songs and dances at celebrations, eating a diet of primarily Filipino food, and attending or participating in cockfights were normal and just part of everyday life. Backyard cockfights were commonplace and would sometimes be held in Gabriela's family's yard, which she saw at the time as exciting and just a hobby of her father's

rather than something that was associated with gambling. She said, "I didn't think it was bad. It was a hobby, my dad's hobby." Cockfighting was just part of the social fabric of the community.

Gabriela was surrounded with positive role models who fostered, through their actions and words of wisdom, the values, habits, and attitudes that guided her along her path and contributed to her success. Respect, diligence, hard work, and dignity in hard labor are values she learned growing up in 'Ewa Plantation. There was not any task too small such as washing dishes, cleaning, and sweeping and mopping floors that were beneath those she knew, Gabriela stated. Her parents did not explicitly discuss these values. They did not have to say anything. Instead it was passed on by example.

Religion and the church played a key role in Gabriela's formative years and provided her with the guidance and support to form her identity and transition smoothly into adulthood. Her parents were strict and made the children go to church every Sunday even if they did not attend as regularly. Ironically, they were not Roman Catholics. Her mother belonged to the Philippine Independent Church (PIC) or Aglipayan Church, which separated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1902 and was primarily driven by the powerful nationalism that originated from the Philippine's war for independence. Her father was Iglesia ni Cristo, a Christian religion also founded in the Philippines. Alhambra surmises that it was probably a matter of practicality for the children to be baptized and the family to become part of the Immaculate Conception Church by default due to its proximity.

The church was such an integral part of the community, serving as a gathering place to worship, for social activities, and other events that it was not surprising for the two sisters and their siblings to become more involved through the religious education classes and eventually the youth groups they joined. A neighbor, Mrs. Millitante, who taught one of the religion classes,



would pick Gabriela up on Sundays to go to church and religion class. Their parents seldom attended church so the older members of the parish were like surrogate parents who watched over them when they were at church. "Growing up we had positive mentors and role models who expected positive things to happen," Gabriela said.

Gabriela described the purpose of the group was to emulate the virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "That's what our purpose was but through that we were able to form like a sisterhood. It was an opportunity for us to find ways to actually serve the people of our church, and not just our church but I would think like the 'Ewa community," she said. As she reached middle school, Gabriela became active in the Sodality and was influenced by the older girls in the Sodality to join, especially her friend who lived on the same street and some of the other girls who were from Banana Camp (Varona Village).

Being part of Sodality taught them to be service-oriented, true to their morals. They supported each other and looked out after each other. The bond shared by the Sodalists is derived from a shared history, "growing up in 'Ewa, our parents, you know had the same history and the families knew each other. They [parents] were okay with us hanging out because they knew each other's families and we did things that were positive. I think because of that they all supported us in all we did," Alhambra explained. Peer, family, and community ties were a vital part of their lives. To be a Sodalist meant to uphold the virtues of Mary. On designated Sundays, Sodalists attended church together and wore blue and white attire. Alhambra said wearing the outfit made her feel a part of the group, unique, and special. Visibly, it made them stand out and set them apart. She said, "I think we wore it with pride" then adds laughing, "who would wear that today?" When I inquired why did the Sodalists wear it with pride, she said, "I guess just the

distinction that we're part of a group." I also asked how she thought other teenagers or members of the church perceived the Sodalists. She guessed that others saw the Sodalists as good girls, respectable.

Gabriela credits her experience with Sodality as a significant part of her growing up as a female teenager—a major source of social capital. Being a Sodalist gave her a moral compass and she said, "it made me remember or keep in mind that as a Christian or Catholic we had to live a certain way." It helped her to be modest in the way she dressed and behaved. Gabriela believes it is important to belong to a group in middle school to high school. She thinks the people and friends you surround yourself with have a strong influence on your life. Sodality was an important part of her upbringing, contributing to a solid foundation. It provided her with emotional support and an internal strength that she did not need to broadcast.

Just as the advisers of Sodality, Mrs. Estillore and Mrs. Daclison, played a significant role in Gabriela's life, they made an indelible mark on Alhambra's as well. Using stories, analogies, and metaphors, the advisers "lectured" the Sodalists on being conservative women who respected themselves and made choices that would not jeopardize their sense of dignity. Alhambra recalled that one of the advisers shared the following story:

If you start having relationships with guys, and like if you kiss somebody, it's almost like an itch, you know. Like . . . to scratch yourself and then it is still going to be itchy and you're going to want to scratch yourself more. You know, it's like that when you have a boyfriend, you know it may start off with a kiss and then after that it's going to lead to more stuff.

"Be mindful of the way you carry yourself so that you respect yourself and others" was the message that the advisers were trying to get across. The advisers' nonverbal language

also communicated their disapproval if the girls were acting in a way that was unbecoming for a young lady. Alhambra said, "I never want to disappoint people that I respect. I never want to disappoint my parents. I [didn't] want to disappoint my, you know, [religion] teachers or advisers, so I would you know not do stuff that would displease them." Other participants I interviewed also commented on how Sodality provided a positive and safe environment for them to grow as individuals, gain life skills, and develop values that helped them gain confidence and strength to strive for and achieve their aspirations. Sodality was a principal source of navigational capital.

Nora and Anderson (2002, p. 337) distinguished between religiosity and spirituality. Religiosity involves the expression of faith in God or a higher power through "symbolic expression of a student's religious beliefs while indicators of spirituality focused on the treatment of one another." Spirituality is more than mere acts or practices and is a deeper appreciation and positive view of others and society. The parish priest, born on Maui but spent time in the Philippines where he was ordained, was strict and stern. Whether it was his intention or not, he instilled a fear of God and seemed to be concerned more with church members following religious practices and rituals such as attending church every Sunday, going to confession, requiring women to wear veils when receiving communion, and participating in devotional prayer than showing compassion, understanding, and mercy. The Sodality advisers shared with us their deep faith in God and spirituality and the essence of what it meant to live your faith. "Deep prayer, you know, respect for the sacrament, respect in the church, that God is present, awareness that going to church is not to play but to pray. We [the two Sodality advisers] [were] on the spiritual side and we wanted to embed into the girls ... that it's important to be aware that

there's the spirit inside of religion," Mrs. Estillore said. The advisers modeled kindness, unconditional love, and humility. Mrs. Estillore said their intention was to prepare us for the ministry – spiritual work or service.

The primary goal of the advisers was not to guide the Sodalists along their educational journey or be a resource for them to explore their career options. They did not discuss educational or career plans with the Sodalists. However, Mrs. Estillore recalled asking in religion class, "What [do] you plan to be? What is your goal?" and saying, "God has a plan for you." For her, their role as advisers was to sprinkle the Holy Spirit and described the Sodality girls as a flower garden.

They're like a flower garden. You sprinkle them with water – spiritual water, the Holy Spirit – and [be a] good example, and a sincere feeling of friendliness to show them that you really care and that you're interested in them. This is the care of a garden; the flowers will bloom. Some flowers will be strong. Some flowers will be weak. Nevertheless, they will grow.

The Sodalists flourished and blossomed under the advisers' care. They were invaluable sources of social capital and provided emotional support, which were not openly or frequently displayed by the girls' families.



*Being part of the Sodality sisterhood provided the type of support that many of us saw portrayed on television of American families but rarely experienced in our own families. Expressing and discussing emotions were not indulged in many traditional Filipino families. With a sprinkling of the holy spirit and abundance of affection and emotional support, Mrs. Estillore and Mrs. Daclison, fostered spiritual growth and a strong sense of what was right and*

*wrong to develop our inner strength. The religion class co-taught by Mrs. Estillore and Mr. Estillore, her husband, taught us it was okay to show emotions. Being able to see it modeled in our religion classes and retreats was one of the most difficult yet valuable lessons we learned.*

*The Sodality was central to the mission of the church and the members were very active in coordinating activities for the youth, church, and community throughout the year. We took the lead—with guidance from our advisers and support from our families and the rest of the congregation—in sponsoring events to celebrate special occasions such as Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and crowning of Mary in the Month of May. To honor the mothers and fathers, we picked flowers from the plumeria trees at the manager's house and throughout the neighborhood to make leis and presented them to parents. For the Easter egg hunts we colored hundreds of donated eggs.*

*We also held, in conjunction with Junior Holy Name, the first banquet for high school graduates. We invited strong Filipina role models and leaders to be speakers. The first one was Connie Chung, former Hawai'i State Representative, who was also an attorney and a nurse. She caught our attention for her work in the Hawai'i State Legislature and successfully overcoming a complaint against her family for keeping a pig as a pet in their Foster Village Home. Emme Tomimbang was the speaker the year I graduated from high school. A trailblazer, she was the first woman of Filipino ancestry to anchor a TV newscast in the United States. Each shared their stories about their personal and family struggles, persistence, and triumphs, thus, validating our own narratives and expanding on our social capital and also serving as a source of navigational capital.*

*Sodalists also cleaned the church on designated Saturdays. As Alhambra noted, we were "exposed to things that parents wouldn't have exposed [us] to, like volunteering at the hospital*

*or . . . doing service work in the community. This was one of the ways we served the community." The social aspect was just as important. Despite Father Caraballo being strict, to the point of being mean at times, he gave the Sodality advisers a lot of autonomy and trusted them to make good decisions. The advisers in turn shared their ideas with the Sodalists and allowed them a lot of leeway to act on them. Surrounded by friends at church that we were comfortable with and felt safe around, we learned to socialize during visits to the beach on Sundays, dances and programs at church, basketball games against other church teams, and playing volleyball at the village park. A strong sense of 'ohana was formed among the Sodality, Junior Holy Name, and Junior Filipino Catholic Club members. The social networks we established with our friends, peers, and adult mentors at church and the knowledge and the skills we gained from our dealings with others contributed to cultivating social capital and navigational capital.*

*The elders empowered and gave us opportunities to develop our leadership skills. From including us in church council meetings to giving the newly elected Solidity president a platform to speak at annual installation of new officers banquet, they showed their confidence in us and we gained the capacity to move beyond our comfort zone. Equipped with all that we learned in Sodality and our church community, we made new connections with other peers, teachers, counselors, school advisers, and others in the school environment that widened our network of support and was a source of navigational capital.*

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Gabriela and Alhambra relied on social capital for support as they faced new experiences. It helped them to navigate systems that were unfamiliar. The leadership, interpersonal, communication, organizational skills, as well as self-awareness were instrumental in steering them along their paths. Leaving the cloistered town of 'Ewa and the church, they became

acquainted with people outside of 'Ewa. Lacking or having only limited contact within their own families who understood the educational system in Hawai'i, the teachers, advisers, and counselors who took an interest in their future plans were a significant part of their successes.

Although Gabriela's parents encouraged her to go to college, they did not really push her to pursue a four-year degree. "I think they would have been happy if I went to Leeward Community College (LCC)" or other post-high school educational training, she said. Getting a good job and living comfortably motivated her to seek higher education. Journalism and architecture interested her, but the health field was what she was exposed to in volunteering at the hospital as a candy striper and having aunts in the nursing profession. She knew she would be able to gain employment as a nurse if she studied in the Philippines and returned to work in the United States because her aunts were able to do so. At school, most of her teachers were more focused on just teaching their subject matter and did not really inquire about her career interests or post-high school plans. There were only a few of them who encouraged her to pursue higher education. Foremost among them was Mrs. Kaku, her honors English teacher who grew up in 'Ewa.

A visit to the Philippines the entire summer before her senior year was the catalyst for Gabriela's decision to pursue nursing as a major and attend college in the Philippines. Her cousin was studying economics at the University of the Philippines (UP). Driving through the university, she was impressed by the nice, huge campus. When her cousin mentioned there were students who were born in the Philippines, grew up in the United States, and have returned to study at UP, the idea of studying in the Philippines began to take shape. Accompanying her aunt to another university for her medical appointment fortified her interest, especially upon seeing the mestizo male students in their nice, crisp white uniforms. Gabriela thought, "Wow, this would be a neat

place to come to school." Exposure to the possibilities gave her a clearer vision of her dream.

Upon sharing her plans with her high school counselor, Gabriela's counselor advised her to apply to a U.S.-accredited university so her coursework would be accepted in the United States if she did not like it in the Philippines and decided to return home and continue her studies.

Gabriela's uncle, who was President Ferdinand Marcos' personal assistant, was surprised in her interest and commented, "You cannot just go to UP, you have to qualify." Nevertheless, he hand-delivered her application materials. The UP president at the time wrote a letter to her uncle stating she could be admitted to the university's school of nursing. His endorsement of her application to the UP registrar expedited Gabriela's application. She was accepted upon graduation from Campbell High School with the condition that she take the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE). The exam was usually administered during the fourth year of high school to students in the Philippines prior to starting college. It was a matter of formality for her, since she had already been accepted, and it included a section on the Filipino (Tagalog) language, which she did not have a command of and did not do well in. The language of instruction was in English so her lack of proficiency in the Philippine language was not detrimental to her academically.

Undoubtedly, her uncle's position and direct access to a network of people from the upper echelons of society and knowledge of and access to community resources unlocked doors for Gabriela and enabled her to gain admission into the university. To succeed academically and be able to navigate the educational, political, and social milieu, she drew heavily on these forms of capital that helped her in the past: aspirational, familial, and social. Gabriela's transition to college was fairly smooth. She immersed herself in her studies and was surrounded by others who were just as dedicated to academics. Notwithstanding already having to catch up with her

cohort who had already begun the school year, due to Philippines' academic schedule being on a different cycle from the United States, her lack of proficiency in Tagalog, and a highly competitive academic environment, she persevered. Her uncle's network provided access to extensive resources and support network but she had to build her own relationships with her peers and other social contacts for emotional support and day-to-day existence. Among her close circle of friends were individuals on opposite sides of the nationalistic movement. Her ability to stay above the fray in a period of great political and social upheaval in the Philippines preceding Marcos's ouster speaks to Gabriela's resilience and resistance to letting anything interfere with her education.

A fundamental difference Gabriela noticed between her and her classmates was the other students' eagerness to raise their hands to answer the professors' questions. "They [were] not afraid to raise their hands and be chosen" to respond to the questions, she said, "They like[d] to talk and they [didn't] just give one-word answers. They like[d] to go on and the teacher would listen and encourage that. I noticed they [were] very studious . . . very diligent in their studies." She never had such an experience in high school where there was a robust discussion and she was encouraged to speak out. Overtime Gabriela got used to it and adjusted to the culture of UP and was able to bring herself to raise her hand and speak up. Her UP experience empowered her to be more assertive, gain confidence in her mastery of the material, and also instilled in her a sense of social justice—prompting her to practice in underserved areas of need and populations in Hawai‘i once she started working. Gabriela earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and subsequently obtained a master's degree in nursing from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. "I always knew I was gonna get at least a master's degree," she said. UP "want[s] their students to become leaders. They push them so a lot of my classmates are PhD holders," she added.

Gabriela paved the way for Alhambra. She shared tips with her younger sister about academics and provided guidance as her sister transitioned into intermediate and high schools. Alhambra drew on her sister's experiences to navigate the way through high school and gain admission to college. Seeing her sister involved in school activities and also being surrounded by friends in Sodality who were successful and were in student government encouraged Alhambra to take the initiative and sign-up for student government, too. My older sister "was the one that told me all of this stuff, so going in I knew what to expect and what to strive for," she said. Heeding Gabriela's advice pointed her in the right direction and she successfully ran and was elected to be vice-president of her class. It was through student council that Alhambra met two people—Mr. Fuchigami and Mr. Lagaso, the class adviser and school student government advisers, respectively—who nurtured her and played critical roles during her high school years. Mr. Fuchigami watched over her and others from 'Ewa and the council. Growing up on a plantation town on the island of Lanai, he could relate to their background and was in a unique position to offer pertinent insights and assistance. He knew I was from 'Ewa and he "put wings, protective wings, over us and kind of guided us," Alhambra reflected. Whenever he saw a scholarship opportunity, he encouraged her to apply. Mr. Lagaso was also instrumental in mentoring her and exposing her to opportunities she would not have had. He went out of his way and provided rides to students and accompanied them to wherever the activity was held. She recalls being picked up by Mr. Lagaso early on a Saturday morning from 'Ewa and bringing her to Kamehameha Schools for a leadership conference. Although she believes he mentored her in part because she was Filipino and "he wanted to help his fellow Filipinos," she was quick to add that he did a lot for the school, in general. As Campbell's student government adviser, he supported and guided the students in developing their leadership skills, helped them to organize

and plan events, and served as chaperone and chauffeur to off-campus activities that exposed them to new experiences and people. The students gained knowledge and skills that promoted navigational capital.

Alhambra was the second in her family to earn a college degree. Just as it was ingrained in Gabriela by their parents and aunts, it was expected that she would continue her education beyond high school. She envisioned that she would go to college, but like her older sister she did not have a clear roadmap of the college application process or awareness of career possibilities. With the exception of a handful of aunts who were professionals in healthcare as nurses and one that was a teacher, those in her closest circle of family and social network were blue-collar workers in the agriculture and service industries. The men worked largely on the plantation and most of the women did not work outside of the home or only worked part-time. A few of them worked at the poultry farm that was located between 'Ewa and 'Ewa Beach in the middle of the sugar cane fields. Alhambra relied on her friends and peer network to traverse unknown territory, applying to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa when they did. It was the only college she considered and was successful in gaining admission. Unlike today's college-going culture, she said, programs and initiatives for career and college readiness was sorely lacking when she was in high school. Very few of her teachers and counselors encouraged her to pursue higher education. Nevertheless, because of her peers and particular teachers, she, like Gabriela, was able to navigate her way toward college.

Conclusion

Gabriela's educational and professional achievements are manifestations of her father's aspirations and parents' hardships. She grew up in a stable household surrounded by an extended family of neighbors who were like her uncles, aunts, sisters, and brothers.

The Sodality advisors and other church mentors were positive role models and instrumental to her spiritual and personal growth, instilling a strong moral compass. Being a Sodalist was an integral part of Gabriela's life, which provided her with emotional support and a sense of belonging. In high school, she availed herself of the support of her teachers, student government advisor, and counselor to navigate the academic and social environment. All these experiences and network were sources of aspirational capital, familial capital, and social capital that she possessed, which cultivated navigational capital to negotiate social institutions and unknown territories. Although Gabriela had limited access to material resources and an array of experiences that might have been available beyond 'Ewa, she did not feel she was disadvantaged.

CHAPTER 5

REBECCA

Rebecca marches to the beat of her own drum. She has remained authentic to who she is and resists being defined by her family's economic and social circumstances. Although unaware of possible educational and career opportunities beyond high school, she always has had a yearning for more. The challenges she and her family experienced, especially the economic hardships, could have constrained Rebecca to the life she knew but instead they motivated her to strive for a brighter future. She is the only girl among her siblings, and the only one to have earned a bachelor's degree. However, she downplays this accomplishment. To her, it was just something that she needed to do. "I would have been prouder if I didn't take long," said Rebecca. She is unique among all the other participants I interviewed in that the source of her aspiration to pursue higher education sprung from somewhere within herself rather than stemming from her parents' own aspirations for her. It makes her breakthrough to overcome obstacles she has encountered, and to continue to keep moving forward to earn her bachelor's degree, even more remarkable. Aspirational capital is the dominant form of community cultural wealth that has sustained Rebecca through her meandering path to her ultimate destination—graduation from college. It was fortified with resistance capital and navigational capital. Just as important was the support of her mother and presence of her friends during pivotal points in Rebecca's educational journey, which were sources of familial capital and social capital.

Although her parents did not stress the importance of doing well in school, or in going to college, it is inherent in the stories of many immigrants that the underlying reasons they come to America are for the opportunities that are available to them. Rebecca's family was no exception. She was four years old when she immigrated with her parents and older brother to Hawai'i from

the Philippine province of Pangasinan. Her maternal grandfather, who worked for 'Ewa Plantation Company, petitioned for his daughter, Rebecca's mother, and her family to come to Hawai'i, thus reuniting them with the rest of his children and their families. They lived with her grandparents, along with her uncles, who were closer to her age than her mother's. In addition to Rebecca's older brother, she has two younger brothers, who were born in Hawai'i. The one just below her is eight years younger and the youngest is 12 years younger.

Of the participants in this study, Rebecca is the only immigrant. Coming to Hawai'i at the age of four, she spent her formative years in the Philippines and in Hawai'i. She provided valuable insights that were unique to her experience as a 1.5-generation immigrant.* Since Rebecca arrived in Hawai'i before she was six years old, she technically would not meet this criterion. However, growing up in Varona Village with a large population of Filipino immigrants, she continued to be immersed in the languages and culture of her native land as she moved within her extended family, school, and the community.

Rebecca characterized the girls from Fernandez and Tenney villages as being "local born" and those from Varona Village as more recent immigrants.

The girls of Fernandez Village "were local girls—they were born, raised [in 'Ewa] and their parents were also born there, raised in 'Ewa. Tenney [Village] was also the same way [local born]. But Varona was more the new one, lot of immigrants from Varona Village. I think that's why we kind of stuck to our own.

From her perspective, the girls from Tenney Village were quiet and did not seem approachable. She said Fernandez girls were sassy; they were rough and tough, and teased and made fun of

* Scholars define 1.5 as those who emigrated from a different country during their adolescent years at the age of six to 12. However, scholars vary in what they consider as the specific cut-off age to be considered as a 1.5-generation immigrant (Benyamin, 2015).

immigrants. She also recalled the Fernandez girls having nicer, store-bought clothes compared to the ones she wore that were sewn by her mother or were hand-me-downs. Very few of her clothes were store bought, much less name brands. If she did have store-bought clothes, they were most likely unknown brands from Arakawas or Gem's store in nearby Waipahu town. Her first shopping excursion to Pearlridge Center—second largest shopping mall on Oahu—was in high school and on a very limited budget.

Rebecca recognized these differences as "petty stuff" and it is "a perspective from a girl that wasn't born [here in Hawai'i]." This comment offered insight into her identifying as an immigrant and into the characteristics that she believed distinguished immigrants from those who were local born. Rebecca regarded her impressions of the local girls' behavior and of her wardrobe of handmade or hand-me-down clothing as trivial. Rebecca's view provided a glimpse into her value system and into her understanding that it was just part of reality and not of something to be overly concerned about.



I was also mindful of being an immigrant and self-conscious about my primarily handmade or non-brand name clothes since my family did not have the luxury to buy brand names either. Like Rebecca, I was pragmatic about it. Unfortunately, outward appearances are the most obvious features that people often base their first impression of a person. Rebecca and I probably were not exceptions, yet in our minds we saw it distinguished us from our local born peers that were up-to-date with the fashion trends and for me part of the "in" or popular crowd. However, I did have the advantage of learning how to sew from patterns that I picked from the McCall's, Butterick, or Vogue catalogs and made my own clothes.

Flipping through the pages of the catalogs introduced me to a variety of fashions, and other lifestyles. I learned to discern with my eyes and touch of my fingers the distinctive qualities of cotton, polyester, chiffon, crepe, satin, and silk. Cotton was ideal for everyday, casual styles and working clothes. Chiffon, crepe, satin, and silk fabrics were reserved for special occasions. In addition to everyday wear, I made my own special outfits for school banquets, wedding, and uniform for Sodality. The range of textiles was a metaphor for material resource, and sewing the process of stitching together a vision. Brand names and high fashion may have been beyond my family's reach to own. However, the catalog of patterns and variety of fabrics gave me a glimpse of other possibilities beyond what I was accustomed to.

Learning to sew also expanded my social network and familiarized me with new ways of interacting with individuals outside the protective shell of the ethnic enclave of Varona. Mrs. Uyehara, my sewing teacher, and my childhood friend who took sewing classes with me were both Japanese, which gave me the opportunity to relate with others who were from a different ethnic background on a more personal level. Mrs. Uyehara spoke limited English yet her kindness and warmth were unmistakable and words were unnecessary to convey her genuine interest in us. My friend's grandfather was the founder of Arakawa's store, a family-owned business that sold everything from household goods, educational workbooks, clothing, cosmetics, and sporting goods. Customers were treated like family and were always welcomed warmly. My friend was down to earth like the rest of the Arakawa family. I noticed that there was less of a strict protocol in the way my friend interacted with her parents than I did with my own. The informality engendered a closeness that I often longed for with my parents. As is the case with many recent immigrant families from the Philippines, the main concerns of my and Rebecca's

parents were providing clothing, food, and shelter for the family. Attending to their children's feelings, thoughts, desires, self-concept, and self-esteem were peripheral.



Rebecca recalled the struggles of her parents providing and making a home for their family. Rebecca's family did not have much money, which she realized at an early age. Her family lived primarily on her father's income that he earned from his plantation and part-time jobs. Her father was first employed at a chicken farm nestled in the sugar cane fields between 'Ewa Plantation Town and 'Ewa Beach. He continued to work part-time there even after he got a job as an irrigation worker with the plantation. At one point he had three jobs, which took its toll; in fact, he almost got into an accident because he was too tired to drive. After the incident, her father reduced the number of jobs that he held. Her mother worked sporadically as a seamstress between raising Rebecca's younger brothers. She stayed home and took care of each new addition to the family until they were old enough to go to school; after which she worked as a seamstress for different companies.

"I understood that my dad didn't make much money and that's why . . . I wanted something better for myself," Rebecca stated. There were things she wanted, "useless" items as she described them, but knew she could not ask for them. When she was young, she remembered wanting a doll that was pretty like her friend's but there was no money to spare for it or for other things like the cost of a uniform or sporting equipment for her younger brother, who wanted to play baseball. Just even to get certain food items, she and her siblings would ask and the answer would inevitably be "no." After awhile, she just stopped asking. For Christmas, Rebecca and her brothers were never given toys or things that did not have a utilitarian purpose. She does not recall their receiving any wrapped presents from their parents or grandparents. The gifts from her

father's uncle were the only nice things they received. He gave them items such as nice towels, but the items were still practical.

Rebecca's description of "something better" was as basic as being able to buy clothes. Rebecca was not thinking of a big house or a luxury car. She knew in order to have a better life she had to go to college. She did not have a clear vision of exactly what she wanted to be or how to get there, but was determined to get an education and not to end up in a dead end job. It motivated her to further her education, so she would be able to afford what was considered in her family to be "luxury" items. Her desire for something better was later motivated by her being able to provide for her own family should she decide to have one in the future. Being pragmatic about her family's financial circumstances and about remaining resolute in her goal for something better nurtured her resiliency and were important sources of aspirational capital.

Although Rebecca's mom supported her aspiration to go to college, it was outweighed by her father's position that they could not afford the cost of her attendance. Thus, she did not have strong encouragement for her to reach for her dreams. However, the values, beliefs, and practices passed on by her family, which she had internalized, fostered a greater sense of agency than she gives herself credit for and were valuable sources of familial capital. Despite her immediate family's financial hardships, the family unit was intact and provided stability. "My mother took care of us. I knew she loved us," Rebecca declared. Her mother cooked, washed her clothes, and disciplined her when necessary by lightly hitting her with a slipper or a stick, which did not quite meet its target as her mother allowed her to escape. She thought that these were the things that someone who cared for you would do. Growing up, this was Rebecca's perception of someone who loved you. A study conducted on the cultural differences in parenting between Western and Asian American culture is consistent with Rebecca's understanding. Her mother's actions are

considered "instrumental support," which is how the parents of the Filipino and Chinese Americans in the study showed their support rather than verbal expressions of affection (e.g., "I love you") (Russell, Crockett, & Chao, 2010). Her older brother was another significant person in her life, a role model and source of support. He was very polite, responsible, and never picked on her like most siblings did—he was just a nice guy. Looking back, she described him as a loving and caring person.

Rebecca's parents were not physically or emotionally affectionate. She described her parents as having been "standoffish" and her family as not talking story about anything too personal. Yet, she spoke of them all as being nice. She did not know if that was typical of Filipino families. She declares with a laugh, "that's why I never grew up to be affectionate. I always blame them." I thought to myself that her comment was so unlike how I perceived her to be. To me, she has always been friendly, approachable, quick to laugh, and possessing a great sense of humor.



In my own family, I also had to show respect and observe strict protocol in my interactions with my parents and other elders. Although there were few outward verbal and nonverbal expressions of affection, devotion to the children was indisputable and an undeniable source of familial capital. My grandmothers had chosen not to remarry because they did not want their children to be treated unkindly by a new husband. Mamang often shared the reasoning for her choice and also fondly reminisced about her husband, my maternal grandfather Silverio. Typical of Nana, she did not say much about her decision not to remarry

after losing her husband, Carmelo, after only five years of marriage. My parents were keenly aware of both their mothers' devotion to their children and were equally dedicated to making my brother and me their top priority.

The commitment to family was reciprocal and flowed in the other direction—from children to parents. My parents regarded it their duty to support and eventually care for my grandmothers as they aged. Except for a few of the 33 years that Nana lived in the United States, she stayed with my parents. Mamang enjoyed her independence in an elderly housing in Waipahu. However, as she got older and needed assistance, she alternated living with my parents, my mother's sister, and my mother's brother and his wife. In the last year of Nana's life, her daughter from Canada and her son from California took turns coming to Hawai'i to help care for her. Relatives on my father's and mother's sides of the families, as well as neighbors, made it possible to care for Nana at home until she passed at 110 years old. Disagreements, big and small, flared and erupted, but it was apparent how devoted my parents and grandparents were to the family.

My father was especially solicitous of Nana. I don't recall exactly what I said, but I was probably asserting myself and questioning his authority in an attempt to advocate for less strict rules and relief from constant reminders about academic performance. In the midst of our discussion, he said he was trying his best to be a parent. His voice cracked and he had tears in the corners of his eyes. It was the first time I saw my father cry. "I have never made my mother cry," he said to me. His comment and tears surprised me and made me realize how deeply he cared for Nana and the magnitude of respect he had for his mother.

As deeply as I cared about my father and my mother, I realized in that instance that their depth of devotion to their parents was unsurpassed. The knowledge tempered my resolve to plead

my case in hopes of eliciting sympathy for the pressure I felt to excel academically and to be a perfect example for my younger relatives. To provide some context, the exchange with my father occurred in my freshman year of high school when I was struggling to get straight As. I had never studied so hard during the entire time I was in high school as I did that year. I was so disciplined to the point that I prayed whenever I started to daydream in order to remain focused. Doing well in math was something that my father stressed. Although I had excelled in math in elementary school, the placement exam I took prior to entering seventh grade landed me in a lower math class (pre-algebra), and off-track, for the higher-level math classes in the eighth and ninth grades. To remedy the situation, I went to summer school so I could take geometry when I entered high school. The accelerated pace of learning math during the summer did not allow me sufficient time to master the material. Combined with having the strictest math teacher, geometry class taxed my intellectual capacity more than my other classes. I, along with two-thirds of the class, attended the tutorials that the math teacher held after school. We attended the tutorials because we wanted to do well in the class, and we knew the teacher was committed to helping us learn. Yet, my goal remained elusive until I finally prevailed in earning an A in geometry and, thus, straight As in the last quarter of my freshman year.

The high expectations my parents set for me were powerful sources of familial capital. However, it also placed extreme pressure on me to succeed, and as a consequence I learned to negotiate and strategize, which promoted navigational capital. Once I shared my feelings with my parents and attempted to make a case for the importance of balancing academics with extra-curricular activities, my father responded, "Are you crazy?" His words underscored the contrast between the traditional Filipino parenting style versus the Western style portrayed on popular television shows. It is more through their actions rather than words that my parents and family

showed their love for my brother and me. Because I was born in the Philippines and had more exposure to the Filipino culture, as well as knowledge of Ilokano, I appreciated this fact. For my brother and Rebecca's younger brothers, who were more immersed in the Western culture, our parents' actions and sacrifices were not as obvious indications of their love.



Respect and industriousness were firmly established as core values in Rebecca's family and were great sources of familial capital. *Dayaw*, a word for respect in *Ilokano*, means treating someone with kindness, courtesy, and consideration, especially the elderly. Rebecca and her brothers were taught not to talk back to their parents or to look them directly in the eyes. If they were scolded, they just had to endure and not talk back. It is something that they accepted and never questioned. Going to church was a given, and they learned the teachings of the Catholic religion. Even before she started attending religious classes or joined Sodality, Rebecca said, "I was not at all rebellious or anything like that, so I never talked back to my parents." To show respect to the elders, they practiced the traditional gesture of *agmano*. This is a Filipino custom to show respect to one who is older by taking the person's hand and raising it to one's forehead. The young or younger persons would extend this gesture to their parents, grandparents, and other elders, as a form of greeting.

Rebecca was respectful of the elders. However, her behavior did not always please her grandmother who pinched her for no apparent reason, based on Rebecca's perspective, anyway. Despite considering herself as not being affectionate, Rebecca was actually high-spirited. For example, she recalled her grandma pinched her because she was outdoors laughing and just having fun. Her grandma thought she was too loud and admonished Rebecca for being silly and laughing for no particular reason. *Arindangga* or *garampingat* are *Ilokano* terms for

rambunctious that her grandmother used to describe her behavior. Her grandmother also pinched her brothers. Rebecca believed her mother was aware of this and thought this was the reason their family moved to another house when Rebecca was in intermediate school. Ever respectful, Rebecca's mother did not confront her own mother, Rebecca's grandmother. Rebecca observed the women did not "talk story" or have a close relationship. Rebecca later learned her mother had told her father that if they did not move out of her parents' house, her mother would go back to the Philippines or find another house to live.

Forging ahead and avoiding being troublesome to her parents were strategies that fostered navigational capital that was helpful for Rebecca. She did not say where she acquired this ability to navigate within her family's household. Perhaps she was influenced by her older brother's exemplary behavior or her mother's ability to withstand difficult situations. Regardless of how she developed it, she succeeded in focusing on her vision. The times she was disciplined were typically for sneaking out of the house when it was naptime for her younger brother whom she had to watch. Rebecca said, "I was expected to take care of my younger sibling when he was born. I used to sneak out of the house because that was my sanctuary."

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*Similar to Rebecca, I was reminded by my family to mind my manners and not be arindangga or garampingat. Whenever I went anywhere without family supervision, I was admonished to behave properly as I headed out the door. Maintaining decorum was stressed. "Agsingsingpet ka," Ilokano for "be good," was a standard phrase I heard often, especially from Mamang and Nana. My grandmothers were very much involved in raising my brother and me. Mamang lived with us, and my parents entrusted our care to her while they were at work. Nana joined our household when I was in middle school. Although their constant reminders to be good*

*sometimes exasperated me, and made me feel constrained, they provided clear standards of how a young lady should behave, including keeping any interested suitors or unwanted attention at bay.*

*This coaching was a form of familial capital that instilled in me good judgment and gave me the ability and strength to handle myself in delicate situations, which came in handily when a trusted, older family friend made a pass at me and grabbed my hand as I rode in his car on our way to meet my parents when I was in middle school. First he asked if I had a boyfriend. I replied, "no." Hypothetically, he said "What would you do if you did have a boyfriend and your boyfriend held your hand?" He proceeded to reach for my hand and grasp it as he spoke. I was shocked and instantaneously pulled back my hand and said, "I'd slap his face." The implication was clear that if he tried to do anything I would fight back. Luckily, my strong response stopped him. I did not tell my parents until years later when I had graduated from college. The core values, which Rebecca and I learned from our families, made us resilient in facing situations that might have been unfamiliar to us, but which we were able to face because of our stable family structure. These were sources of familial capital that also fostered navigational capital.*

*I tried to live up to the expectations of what constituted proper behavior but I took the principles of the U.S. Declaration of Independence about equality seriously. I was not always obedient and asserted myself when I felt strongly about something. On one occasion, the issue was welcoming relatives arriving from the Philippines. Having fun playing outdoors with other children my age, which I rarely had the chance to do, I did not want to go to the airport to greet the new arrivals with Mamang, my brother, and Apo Colas, my mother's uncle who also lived briefly with us in 'Ewa, and who was our ride. Mamang insisted that I go with them and tried to force me into Apo Colas's blue four-door Nova Chevrolet.*



*Managing to extricate myself from Mamang's grasp, I stood my ground and started walking away from the car. My relatives went to the airport without me. I initially planned to walk to my cousin's house near the elementary school on the other side of Waipahu. Perhaps this is what my relatives expected as well because no one came after me. However, as I neared my cousin's house, I kept on walking. Catching the bus crossed my mind but I did not have any money. At the juncture of Farrington Highway and Kunia Road, I stood still and contemplated running away and looked towards where Kunia Road stretched towards the mountains until it met with the horizon. Realizing I did not have the resources to survive, I continued walking along Farrington Highway towards the Old Fort Weaver Road. As I neared the area where Kahi Mohala is now located, I tried to find a short cut through the sugar cane fields. Uncertain where the road led, I walked back to the main road and continued on my way along Old Fort Weaver Road.*

*In my Famolare sandals, blue Junior Police Officer (JPO) skirt, and purple short-sleeved blouse that my mother had sewn, I walked more than seven-miles and was almost home on Renton Road in front of J Club in Tenney Village when my father came upon me on his way home from work. It must have been around 3:30 pm. My father asked where I was going. I said "home" and got in the car. I do not think he knew what happened. We did not talk about it until recently. In my family, the adults had complete control over what they believed to be in the best interests of my brother and me. My attempt to explain myself was ignored, and I failed to deflect the sting of the sungka game board on my buttocks when my mother spanked me. I am uncertain if this incident broke my spirit for I knew that I would be disciplined and accepted the*

*consequences. I did promise to listen to my parents. In high school I found writing to my parents was a more effective strategy for advocating for my interests, seeking permission, or providing justification for my point of view.*

*My ability to stand-up to authority, and to be accountable for any possible consequences, was a valuable source of resistance capital, as well as navigational capital. I trace the ability to exercise these forms of capital to my parents. Accounts of my mother's courage to defy her family, as well as challenge unfair treatment in the workplace, set an example for me to follow. My brother's birth on the fourth of July introduced me to the Declaration of Independence and its significance in American history and the ideal that every person has a right to be free within society from oppression. Around the same time, my father was preparing to become a naturalized U.S. citizen and he would quiz me on what he was studying about U.S. history and government. Also, Bible stories about oppression and justice were powerful influences.*



Industriousness and diligence were traits found among the laborers who worked on the plantation and were values that were passed on to their children and families, specifically, a strong work ethic was mentioned as relevant to all the participants in the study. Rebecca and her brothers were expected to help with the household chores. Her oldest brother had a newspaper route. As she grew older she took over the household chores except for cooking, which her mother continued to do. She also helped her mother with the laundry by hanging, taking down, and folding the clothes. Her brothers were tasked with washing dishes and cooking rice. Rebecca complained at the time about doing chores, but she now feels that having the responsibility was good for her in the long run and helped her to grow. For Rebecca, a sense of responsibility in the household was also a source of navigational capital.

In addition, the physical and social structures of Varona Village were conducive for fostering a collective identity for the workers and their families, which promoted social capital. The neighborhood kids gathered at the park, which had swings, a slide, a seesaw, a merry-go-round, a pull-up bar, and a sandbox. The clubhouse was on the other side of the street from the park. It had an asphalt court to the side for basketball and volleyball games. The clubhouse was an old structure, but spacious. It had a kitchen and a dining area at which food was served. The main part of the hall had a stage, benches along the sides, and a large open space in the center for dancing and other activities. The annual Christmas programs, graduations, baptisms, birthdays, and wedding parties were held here. For large gatherings, the men of the village were in charge of preparing the feast; they held the pig for the party in a cement pen located in the back of the clubhouse. Rebecca commented, "I remember going to see the pigs, which was interesting." On the morning of the event, Rebecca heard squeals as the men slaughtered the pig. The men cooked the various Filipino dishes in huge woks, or *celiasi*, set on cut-out oil drums with keawe wood burning underneath.

Church was another source of social capital for Rebecca. She routinely attended every Sunday with her grandmother. Her oldest brother was a dedicated altar boy who also attended church weekly and was actively involved with Junior Holy Name. Unlike some of the other participants I interviewed, Rebecca did not aspire to be part of Sodality. Nevertheless, she became a member prior to her senior year in high school just to appease her friends from Varona Village, who were pressuring her to join, as well as at the invitation of one of the Sodality advisers. "People were bugging me," she said. Notwithstanding her initial reluctance, being part of Sodality gave her a sense of belonging and it was an important source of social capital, aspirational capital, and navigational capital.

Rebecca said, being part of Sodality "made me more comfortable approaching people; it made me a lot bolder." She described herself as being shy and she reflected that it might have been because she did not have too much self-confidence. Being shy and not one to open up to others she never had someone she considered a best friend to share her innermost thoughts and feelings. "I like that we did activities and there was that closeness that we had," she said. Although, for her, it did not evolve to the level of personal intimacy shared between best friends, she was glad there were people with whom she could interact and do things. The feeling of being part of the group—participating in activities, working to get something accomplished—was something she really liked. Rebecca enjoyed being part of the all-girls group and gained friends. Being part of a group kept her in Sodality, and motivated her to be there. Her experience with Sodality gave her a greater understanding of, and meaning in, the church rituals and practices that were ingrained in her, observances which she practiced since childhood.

Although Rebecca had a greater appreciation for the religious rituals and practices, she reiterated that what she most valued from her experience with Sodality was being part of a cohesive group and just being with the girls. Her purpose for joining Sodality was not to seek a deeper religious or spiritual awakening. In fact, Rebecca did not care too much for the retreats on spiritual teachings and prayers that included sharing one's emotions, thoughts, and experiences within the circle of Sodalists. Just listening and reflecting was fine with her, but she did not care to talk about herself and found it uncomfortable. The social network that Rebecca gained through Sodality is a critical aspect of social capital, and it contributed to the aspirational capital and navigational capital that were key factors in her attainment of her educational and career goals.

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The social capital that Rebecca attained through Sodality was a key form of community cultural wealth that mirrored my own experience. Joining Sodality expanded my social network and connected me with peers and adults in the church. Although I saw the girls who lived in Varona Village around the neighborhood, we went to different high schools and I did not know them very well. Sodality brought us, as well as the other Sodalists, closer as we spent more time together planning and sponsoring various projects, learning about our faith, and interacting with a wider circle of individuals. The bond that we developed was the catalyst for the Varona girls to socialize outside of church activities, which led to other pursuits beyond the familiarity and security of our community.

The summer before my junior year in high school, and Rebecca's senior year, we, along with three other Sodalists from Varona pursued our interests in tennis. Since the nearest tennis courts were located four miles away at 'Ewa Beach Community Park across Campbell High School, we would catch the bus to play practically everyday. Duke and Roscoe, two retirees and tennis aficionados, took us under their wings and became our mentors. Along with 10 to 15 other youths, they coached us and drove us in a large white van to tennis tournaments around Oahu, including Kailua and Kamehameha Schools. Our younger siblings, as well as a few other friends from Varona, occasionally joined us. The informal lessons we learned extended beyond the tennis courts. Duke and Roscoe told us stories, made us laugh, and encouraged us to strive to be our best. Roscoe lived in 'Ewa, and that connection is probably what put our parents at ease about being in the company of the coaches and the other kids.

That summer was also my first introduction to being actively involved in a political campaign. The same group of girls, along with other teenagers from Varona, campaigned for Eileen Anderson and defeated the popular incumbent mayor, Frank Fasi. Recruited by one of the

Immaculate Conception Church parishioners, we sign-waved, canvassed throughout 'Ewa, and sang a jingle to the tune of the song "You Are My Sunshine" at campaign rallies and into a bullhorn while riding in the back of a pick-up truck. On the campaign trail, we encountered Fasi supporters, who emerged from their houses or yards and responded by waving their candidate's signature "shaka" campaign signs. Their responses and the dogs barking at us did not deter us from our mission, and we felt energized and victorious when Anderson won. This experience brought us out of our comfort zone and exposed us to an entirely untapped social network and community resources. I gained knowledge and skills that fostered social capital, as well as an understanding of government and the electoral process that cultivated navigational capital. What I learned prepared me for future political campaigns, community organizing, advocacy, and internship with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor in my senior year of college.

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Rebecca associated mostly with people from Varona and a few other girls from the other plantation villages, as well as her cousins who were in the same school when they were all in the eighth grade. As two of her younger Sodality friends from Varona Village entered high school, she started to hang out with them. Coming from the same village and immigrant background, she felt more comfortable with them. She did not hesitate to separate from her other friends, since they were a bad influence and often cut class.

Rebecca does not recall her teachers ever mentioning college, and she did not seek assistance for it thinking it was futile in light of her father indicating that he could not provide financial support. "I loved my dad because he did provide for us, but I didn't respect him as, I guess, as a father in that sense that he didn't provide for us academically," she said in a matter-of-fact way. Her mother, however, encouraged her to pursue her aspirations but lacked the funds to

pay for her schooling. Knowing her family did not have money to pay for college, she took the test to enter the military in order to pay for college. Passing the exam was not a problem, but her father refused to give his consent or sign the form for her to enlist since she was not yet legally an adult at the time of graduation, which thwarted her plans to fund her education through the military.

Despite not being knowledgeable about the college application process or about having any ideas about specific majors or career interests, Rebecca did not give up, and was inspired by her peers. "I guess I just didn't want to be not educated and I didn't want to be at a dead end job," Rebecca stated. Thinking of her future, she knew she did not want to be married and unable to provide adequately for her family. She claimed a mutual friend of ours and I influenced her resolve. She looked to us as role models, and because we were pursuing higher education at UH-Mānoa, which could possibly lead to greater job opportunities. This is another example of how her social capital supported her aspirational capital.

Eventually Rebecca enrolled at Leeward Community College (LCC). Financial cost was a significant factor in her decision to attend LCC because it was more affordable than UH-Mānoa. She did not know about student loans. Rebecca indicated she was not motivated in researching available loans, educational opportunities, and career possibilities in part because she was not encouraged to go to college. Although she knew about scholarships, she felt she was not smart enough to be eligible and was unfamiliar with other types of financial assistance besides those based on merit. Throughout her studies at LCC and UH-Mānoa, she worked at various jobs including Diner's Drive Inn, the YMCA, and others. Balancing school and work was a struggle for her. Fortunately, her father finally capitulated and paid for some of her tuition.

Lack of financial resource was not the only challenge that Rebecca faced in her goal to earn a college degree. She stated, "I was floundering at Leeward . . . just doing this and that, kind of finding an interest." Surprisingly, she found she liked botany and microbiology. She loved what she was studying, but does not know why she did not pursue those fields of study. First-generation college students often do not have individuals within their social network who have gone to college and can help them navigate the process of applying to college, securing financial assistance, and navigating the college academic and social environment. As it turned out, teaching catechism was something that sparked her interest and set her on her path to pursuing an education degree, which meant that she needed to transfer to UH-Mānoa.

Transitioning to UH-Mānoa, Rebecca recalled, "I felt a little strange, but it was okay, I was there to learn so it was alright." Older than the others in her classes, she felt a bit odd and different. She took a lot of miscellaneous courses at LCC that did not fulfill the prerequisites she needed for the UH-Mānoa education major, which required her to take another four years to complete her education degree at UH-Mānoa. It took her a while to gain momentum. In the end, it took her nine years to complete her degree, longer than she had hoped. Nevertheless, she was determined and stated, "I wasn't going to quit in the middle. Yeah, I needed to finish it." Rebecca earned her bachelor's degree and became an elementary school teacher nine years after she graduated from high school.

### **Conclusion**

Rebecca traversed an uncharted course that was not a straight path, yet she managed to find her way and to succeed with a bachelor's degree in elementary education. Although it took nine years, she was determined and persisted in making something of herself. Her mother was supportive of Rebecca's aspiration, but her father discouraged her due to the family's financial



situation. Because she did not have his support to go to college, she felt it was futile to ask anyone for help in achieving her goal. No high school teachers or counselors reached out to her, either. Rebecca is unique in that her aspiration to pursue a college degree in order to have a better life originated from within herself, unlike the other participants whose aspirations were largely intertwined with their parents or other family members. Sodality gave her a sense of belonging to be part of the "sisterhood" and the confidence to approach people. The Sodality girls were sources of social capital, and she looked to two of the Sodalists who attended UH-Mānoa as roles models who inspired her to keep striving. Aspirational capital, resistance capital, familial capital, and navigation capital were the dominant forms of community cultural wealth that guided and uplifted Rebecca to reach her goal of having a better life.

## CHAPTER 6

### ROSE

Rose's smile and laughter originate from deep within her inner core and spring forth as she speaks. Her easy laughter belies the intensity in which she pursues her passions. Her seemingly easygoing nature stems from her enduring faith in God. In Hebrew 11:1 (New American Standard Bible), it says that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Rose lives in the moment and trusts that God has everything planned, and that things happen for a reason. Rose's siblings and her husband marvel at how everything in her professional and personal life seem to fall into place effortlessly. Some people would say that she has a "blessed" or "graced" life. However, Rose faced her share of challenges, and in those difficult times she turned to her faith for strength and guidance. In fact her faith played an important role in all aspects of her life and flowed across the six forms of cultural wealth: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistance, and linguistic.

Notably, Rose was raised in an environment rich in community cultural wealth and she availed herself of the resources that were already present and took the initiative to fortify them. She claimed that her faith is the cornerstone of all that she has accomplished, which permeates all through the six forms of capital. "These various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Although she attended church regularly, her faith went deeper than merely following religious rituals and practices. She has always prayed and put her fate in God's hands in the face of major events and has come up with the acronym ASAP for "Always Say A Prayer." She begins her day with a prayer and always prays at the end of the day.

Mary—the mother of Jesus, Sodality, and Rose's maternal grandmother have had the greatest influence on Rose's faith. In Rose's eyes, Mary was the "ultimate woman," to whom she looked up. Of all the Sodalists, Rose was the one who fully embraced Mary. Seeing her sister and other Sodalists wearing long white dresses with blue capes and beanie uniforms struck her with a sense of pride, and she thought of them as "going to be something" someday. She saw the camaraderie they shared and could not wait to join Sodality and be a part of it. "Coming from a small community that was very faith-based . . . you look up to the people that you see, and I saw [the girls in] Sodality," she said. The Sodalists were role models who served as her inspiration.

People at church regarded the Sodalists very highly for all the activities they held and their service to the community. "I looked forward to being, not so much idolized by the youngsters, but to me . . . [be part of] the stuff that I saw the Sodality do, to me it was just 'wow', 'wow.'" She was amazed and thought the activities, including cleaning the church and feeding the homeless, "united the church" members. Among the participants I interviewed, Rose was the most fervent about joining Sodality, and the only one who expressly aspired to be part of the group.

In fact, becoming a member of Sodality when she reached intermediate school deepened her faith. Rose adopted the values that were associated with Mary such as humility, charity, purity (not just in terms of sexuality but in terms of the pureness of her heart), obedience, prayer, and living one's faith. She said many of the qualities she learned about being a nurturing, loving mother were cultivated through the teachings about Mary. Being part of the group, and interacting with others in the church on various projects, bolstered her confidence and developed her social skills, which provided her with the courage to overcome her shyness and emerge out of her cocoon.

To her, the Sodalists were the epitome of ideal teenage girls. The older Sodalists led the group, and mentored the younger girls to eventually succeed them once the older Sodalists graduated from high school. They were key sources of social capital and, through their example and guidance, nurtured aspirational capital and navigational capital. Rose looked up to the older girls and saw that they were "confident young women" who did not need a "guy to be the leader." She aspired to be like them—independent, strong, and self-assured. "They had their own agenda, they did their own thing, that's what I wanted to be. I didn't want to be dependent on anybody," Rose said. Just as she considered the older Sodalists as role models when she first joined the group, Rose recognized when she was older and became one of the officers that she needed to uphold the essence of what it meant to be a Sodalist. The confidence and social skills that she gained in Sodality helped her to navigate her role as an officer and return to college to earn her bachelor's degree in nursing 25 years after she graduated from high school.

Rose credits Sodality for her successes, and shares the impact that the group has had on her life:

"Without the Sodality, I don't think I would be in this position that I am [in now] because it made me confident," Rose reflected. "Because we're all just women, [we] could be ourselves and we could talk about things that girls would," she remarked. Laughing, she continued, "We could just let our hair down and just be girls. When we were with the boys, it was a whole different story. We weren't ourselves, and that's natural."

Interacting with the men and boys in the church was also an integral aspect of her social development; here, she described the impact it had on her:

It helped build my confidence and my social skills because we had to interact with the men or the altar boys and all of that, so it made me come out of my shell. And it helped

develop a lot of characteristics that I know I wouldn't have done on my own. Because I was awkward, I was shy. I wanted to be a nun so I was introverted. So it gave me confidence, it helped, actually, develop my characteristics.



*Sodality was as transformative for me as it was for Rose. I joined Sodality in the spring of my sophomore year in high school at the invitation of one of the older teenage girls who lived on my street in Varona Village. On the other end of the street, I met another teenage girl, Kristina, in the same grade as I was and we became close friends. We lived only two houses apart, but we had not met until then because we went to different high schools and seldom socialized with other youths in our neighborhood. Then, we joined Sodality at the same time, along with her sister and her sister's friend from Varona. The four of us, plus Rebecca, became the core group of Varona girls in Sodality once the older members graduated from high school. We were all born in the Philippines and had very strict parents. Because our parents knew each other, they trusted that we would look out for each other and be safe within the church community. Getting involved with Sodality allowed us to have a social life outside of the school setting. The social interactions and social network we formed were vital sources of social capital that enriched our navigational capital.*

*Since elementary school, I was involved with student government and other extra-curricular activities. Interestingly, I was more comfortable speaking before a large audience and to adults than socializing with my peers. The social events I attended were school-sanctioned*

*activities in structured settings in which I usually had a specific role to play. Sodality and the church activities bolstered my navigational capital in giving me the opportunity to interact with my peers and adults in informal settings.*

*Similar to the participants I interviewed in this study, I also felt the camaraderie and sense of belonging, assets that boosted my confidence and empowered me to be myself and to cultivate greater senses of self-worth. Underlying this transformation was the foundation that the Sodality advisers laid for us. They taught us through the stories they shared, the values they fostered, and behavior they modeled. As one of the Sodality advisers said, "We don't do it by telling you, we do it by sharing." She added, "See, there's nothing impossible with you girls. When I look at you girls, there are potentialities. God loves you so, and God must love because we're there and building you up." The advisers introduced a loving, caring figure in Mary. She was more accessible, non-judgmental, and an intermediary who we could pray to for guidance. The advisers and fellow Sodalists made me feel special, and were valuable sources of aspirational capital and social capital.*

*As a teenager, I struggled to emulate Mary's virtues to perfection. It motivated me to excel and cultivated aspirational capital. However, as I reflect on my experience as a Sodalist, I realize the point was not to reach an impossible standard but to learn from the process and to trust in my faith. I reached for what was seemingly impossible and ran for junior class president the same year I joined Sodality. I campaigned hard and hoped to win, but I was running against a two-term incumbent who was a star athlete so I went to church and prayed to God and Mary on the day of the election, which is what I did before any major decision or event. I placed the outcome of the election in their hands and felt peaceful regardless of what the result was going to be. Surprisingly, I garnered enough votes in the primary to win outright and we did not have*

*to hold a general election. Throughout high school, and in times when I needed guidance, God always answered my prayers when I prayed unselfishly. It might not always have been what I wanted, but for the most part I knew deep in my heart that it was the best for me. A good friend in college used to say that I had a guardian angel watching over me. I did feel safe and protected, which was reassuring and helped me navigate the unfamiliar landscape of UH-Mānoa.*



Sister Agnes was a real-life guardian angel of sorts and a source of social capital and navigational capital for Rose. They connected, and on one of Sister Agnes's visits to Immaculate Conception Church, they engaged in a deep conversation. Sister Agnes commented on Rose's questions being above the level of most girls her age. Rose was fascinated with being Catholic and wanted to be a nun. They established a good rapport and Rose asked if she could visit the Daughters of St. Paul Bookstore in Downtown Honolulu, which Sister Agnes managed. Sister Agnes recognized Rose's love of reading and invited her to help at the bookstore. In return, the sisters gave Rose books at no cost to her. Early on Saturdays in the summer, she would take the bus by herself to visit with Sister Agnes at the bookstore until it was time for Rose to go home in the afternoon and Sister Agnes would see her off at the bus stop.

Looking back, Rose is somewhat astonished that she actually was permitted to travel the 20 miles on the bus by herself. Connecting with Sister Agnes enabled Rose to maximize her social capital and to learn to navigate a different environment—a bookstore in Downtown Honolulu. This experience provided her with an opportunity to map out, by riding the bus, a broader swathe of O‘ahu and to learn how to travel independently to an unfamiliar place. Perhaps it was evident to her family early on that she possessed the navigational skills that have served her well.

Familial capital also strengthened Rose's navigational capital. As the third child in a family of six children, she learned from the experiences of her older brother and older sister. "I could kind of find my way. You know, make mistakes that they made . . . but not get the repercussions from making those mistakes," she said. Rose also had the advantage of being raised by her grandmother and of commanding her full attention, which set Rose apart from the rest of her siblings. Rose's father had promised his wife he would bring his mother-in-law from the Philippines to Hawai'i with the money he won from chicken fights. Rose's parents petitioned for her grandmother to come to Hawai'i for the explicit purpose of helping to raise her since Rose's mother had become pregnant again shortly after Rose was born. Her grandmother was her constant companion and best friend. They formed a special bond and were so close that when Rose was a child, she mistakenly thought her grandmother was her biological mother.

Alas, Rose said she felt like an outcast because she was always with her grandmother. Her siblings grew accustomed to the two of them spending a lot of time together, but it did not allay the jealousy that some of her sisters felt about her relationship with their grandmother. It was obvious she was her grandmother's favorite and had a special place in the family because her grandmother treated her differently from her brothers, sisters, and cousins. Rose claims she did not attempt to ingratiate herself to her grandmother. Nevertheless, Rose's grandmother would set aside or save food for her. "I didn't do anything different," Rose claims, "I would [just] do what they [family] say; [I was] very straight arrow."

Rose reflected on how her grandmother's faith and her ability to overcome obstacles have had an impact on her life:

I honestly think my faith had a lot to do with my grandmother. Because she was such a devout person, and seeing the obstacles that she had gone through in her young life and



how she made it through, gave me hope . . . All the hardships that she had gone through, she came out of it and she made it. So it just made me think that . . . if God did it for her, he's going to do it for me too.

Her grandmother had overcome many trials, including her husband dying from pneumonia when she was seven months pregnant, losing her brother when he succumbed to tuberculosis, and being away from her children to take a job in the city. Through it all, she would pray every time she felt alone.

Rose's grandmother and parents attended church regularly and were very active with the many organizations and with the upkeep of Immaculate Conception. Family life was centered on church activities four days out of the week. All of the people Rose grew up with went to church on Sundays. The youths attended religion classes on a weekly basis. Every evening, her entire family prayed the Rosary together, and on Mondays they would join other parishioners for the Rosary at church. Saturdays would be a time for them to clean the church and arrange the flowers for the altar for the next day. In addition, there were special religious occasions that they celebrated as a family, or with the church community. Rose embraced the religious practices and traditions that brought 'Ewa families together. The family's involvement in church life was a source of familial capital and social capital.

Rose's ties to 'Ewa Plantation were as strong as her connection to her faith, providing sources of valuable familial capital and social capital. Prior to attending Ilima Intermediate School and Campbell High School, she had lived in a cocoon, oblivious to economic and social circumstances outside the plantation community in which she was raised. In 'Ewa, a large majority of the residents were Filipino, and that is who she was surrounded by and mostly interacted with up to the sixth grade. A descendent of *Sakadas*, who came to Hawai'i on the ship

Siberia Maru in 1917, Rose traces her ancestral roots to the islands of Luzon and Visayas in the Philippines. Her paternal great-grandfather and grandfather came together to work for 'Ewa Plantation Company while the rest of the family stayed behind in the Philippines. They lived in the single men's quarters where everyone gathered at night to cook, play cards, and reminisce about their homeland. Life on the plantation was not what the recruiters had painted for them and many of the men could not wait to return to the Philippines. Promises of a home, good job, and other benefits did not come to fruition for them. Her great grandfather greatly missed his family in Cebu, a city in Visayas, Philippines. As soon as he saved enough money and fulfilled the terms of his contract, he went back to his homeland. In his mid-teens at the time, Rose's grandfather decided to remain in Hawai'i and establish a home and a family. Her grandfather married someone from 'Ewa but she died before Rose was born, and she did not get a chance to really become familiar with that side of the family. Her parents were matched by her mother's uncle who worked with Rose's father. Thus, her mother came to Hawai'i in 1967 to join her father. On her paternal side she is third generation in Hawai'i and second generation on her maternal side.

Rose's identity is deeply rooted in 'Ewa, and is a definite source of familial capital and social capital. She was raised in 'Ewa and has lived in Fernandez Village all her life, the same home that her paternal grandfather lived in, which was built in the 1950s. 'Ewa will always be home to Rose. She cannot imagine living anywhere else. When she was growing up, families knew each other, did everything together, and had all they needed right in the plantation town. They did not have to venture outside except to attend intermediate school and high school, and the occasional visit to Arakawas. Growing up in Fernandez Village, she fondly recalls the kids having the entire neighborhood as their playground. For snacks, they would simply pick fruit

from the guava, mango, and other trees. When the streetlights came on, everyone knew to go home. It was the rule, and the parents did not have to round up the kids.

The stories that Rose remembers about 'Ewa, her family, and community are sources of familial capital and also reveals how intertwined and involved the families were with each other's lives. Families could leave their doors open without worrying about anyone breaking in or stealing. The story of the pot of huli-huli chicken revealed how trusting neighbors were of each other. Rose recalled a time when her entire family had to go somewhere so they all got into their station wagon, but they remembered they were expecting a delivery of huli-huli chicken that they bought for a fundraiser. The dilemma was easily solved by her father placing a huge pot on a stool on their front porch with the note "leave chicken in pot." Upon their return, the pot was full of the chicken they had ordered.

One of the plantation workers who lived in Fernandez was an avid gardener. Rose remembered, "We could tell what season it was because of his garden. During the summer, he'd plant corn and during the winter he'd have his eggplants and, oh my gosh, his *otong* or long beans." Not only did he love to garden, but he was also a living history book. He corroborated accounts of Rose's great-grandfather, grandfather, and father having "very short, quick tempers," which she discovered while going through boxes of memorabilia and documents saved by the three generations of men in her family. Rose's children listened in disbelief to the exploits of the men in their family, which the village oral historian confirmed in his own retelling of the men's feats. According to Rose, the elders were historians because they told stories of the past. She found disciplinary papers of her great-grandfather hitting one of his co-workers with a pipe on the head and attempting to throw him in the boiler. Her grandfather was equally temperamental and got into fights with his boss. He was arrested once, put on probation, and fired from his

plantation job. After working briefly at Pearl Harbor, he returned to work on the plantation. Rose was unaware of the reasons for the incidents. Despite their quick tempers, there were also commendation letters mixed with the other documents. Although Rose likely will never know the grounds for the men's fights, the stories of them challenging authority figures are sources of resistance capital.

Rose was not aware of any specific situation in which her father had lost his temper in the work setting, but she had witnessed his temper at home. "I'm never going to be ashamed of my father," she said, "but my father had a quick temper and he used to hit my mom." She remembered an incident when she was ten years old of her parents fighting and yelling at each other, while she stood on the bed watching and crying. Her brothers and sisters were in the other room. Her father had walked out of the room and stepped back in with clenched fists. At that moment Rose intervened. She said, "I don't know what motivated me but I jumped off the bed and I stood in between [my parents] and I said 'stop it.'" Her father told her to "get out of the way" but she stood her ground and said "no." Even when he said "Get out of the way, I'm going to hit you," Rose said she refused and her father was stunned. He turned around and walked out as her mother cried, shocked and shaken.

Astounded at what had just transpired and at her part in it, she noted the fund of resistance she developed in witnessing her parents' conflicts: "I vowed never to let a man do that to me and I vowed never to let things get the way it did." The huge age gap and the cultural differences between the local and traditional Filipino cultures were factors that she felt contributed to the breakdown in communication between her parents, and in her parents' relationship. Her mother's uncle had arranged the marriage to her father, who was twice her

mother's age, 16 to his 34 years. Being "local born", her father did not speak the same language, Ilokano, as her mother so they communicated with each other in English.

Ultimately, her parents divorced, but ironically became closer to each other after the dissolution of their marriage. Rose was 16-years-old at the time and described the period as traumatic and very saddening. However, she was also happy because there was a silver lining: her father would never again be able to harm her mother. Divorce is not sanctioned in the Catholic religion, and there was an even greater stigma attached to it in the 1980s compared to today. The mantra was "you stay together for the sake of the kids." Sadly, Rose did not want to go to church and be scrutinized about it. Thus, Rose said she turned inwardly and said [I] spent a lot of "alone time, said my own rosaries, and that's when I grew very self-sufficient, and very strong in my relationship with God." She said "As a youth, I always knew that things happened for a reason; God must have had a reason for this, and [so] I let it go." Rose coped with the situation and prayed, which she did on her own outside of church. Even her friends did not know the turmoil she was going through because she hid it from them, and always presented herself as "happy."

Despite the situation with her parents, she grew up in a fairly sheltered environment with special attention and guidance from her grandmother, mentors from church, and from individuals in the 'Ewa community. Specifically, the community and church had a central role in the development and reinforcement of her family values and societal standards, as illustrated in the case of the huli-huli chicken, as well as the following incident of the stolen cassette tape. Rose's brother was arrested once when he and a friend stole a cassette tape from the gym. Their father went "ballistic because he knew that work was going to find out," Rose stated, and "he was afraid of what his boss would say about the family." O'ahu Sugar was the new management and

was concerned about the private lives of the employees and with fostering of family values. The neighbors, church members, and priest learned about it. Her brother's action brought shame on the family, especially because he was an altar boy and he broke one of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not steal." The priest and members of the church admonished her brother. He had to do community service, and their father's boss verbally reprimanded their father. "It scared all of us because we never [stole before], and nobody else in our family stole," Rose remembered. "We learned from that one incident."

The incident with her brother unnerved Rose's family, but the church and the community's response demonstrated the strength of the familial capital and social capital in providing guidance and reinforcing values. Rose's grandmother was a major source of familial capital. She was in charge not only of her granddaughter's spiritual education, but also of her schooling. During the summers, when school was not in session, she brought Rose to Ewa Shopping Basket where she worked as a butcher. Rose sat at the back of the warehouse, learning to read, write, and do division. Her grandmother set high expectations for Rose and made certain that she performed to the best of her ability. In between doing her homework, under her grandmother's close supervision, she would pray the Rosary, thereby continuing to keep her faith at the forefront.

Other significant figures in Rose's life, who were also sources of social capital and navigational capital, included two of her teachers from Ewa Elementary School. "I admired my third grade teacher, Mrs. Taniguchi. She used to yell at us, but from her I learned the most," Rose declared. When Rose started kindergarten, she was already reading and her school was ready to promote her to a higher grade but her parents decided against it. When she was in the third grade, her reading was already at a sixth grade level; even so, there were words she came across that

she did not understand the meaning. Mrs. Taniguchi empowered her to take the initiative and use her brain. Furthermore, from her she learned to use the dictionary and the first word she looked up was "enthusiasm." Mrs. Taniguchi told her, "make a list, write those words and go look in the dictionary and you can find the meaning. By the end of the year, Rose had filled enough sheets of paper with words to make a booklet. She said, "I have an affinity for words, and it's because of Mrs. Taniguchi."

However, it was Mrs. Ito, her teacher for the gifted and talented, who had a special place in her heart and who was her favorite teacher. Rose spent a lot of time during recess and lunch with her, and they developed a close relationship. Not only did she bask in her teacher's nurturing ways, but also admired her poise and fashionable taste in shoes and clothes. It sparked an interest in fashion design that led to her becoming a fan of Princess Diana, who was set to marry Prince Charles the year Rose was in the sixth grade. Mrs. Ito was well aware of Rose's newfound interest and gave her a Royal Wedding book, which is one of her most prized possessions. At the time, she idolized Princess Diana for being a fashion icon, but later appreciated how she was able to emerge from a turbulent relationship and become an independent woman, her own person. Rose's relationship with her teachers, as well as her perspective on Princess Diana, empowered and encouraged her to use her own agency.

Next, from Ewa Elementary, Rose attended seventh and eighth grades at Ilima Intermediate School and then Campbell High School. All the other elementary schools located in Campbell school complex—Ewa Beach, Barbers Point (now called Kalaeloa), and Makakilo (now part of Kapolei)—fed into Ilima and Campbell. For the first time, Rose met, and was surrounded by, a more ethnically and culturally diverse student body. She was uneasy with the

students from the other groups and stayed within her comfort zone. She described aspects of the other students' behaviors that made her uncomfortable:

Their way was different than 'Ewa, you know, they were a lot more verbal, a lot more rude. A lot more, you know, not so close knit and [spoke] a lot of vulgarity—rude, crude behaviors. [I] wasn't used to that. We didn't swear as much, you know, we didn't even swear. I think we were all scared.

Rose said that her "biggest eye opener to cultural diversity was probably in high school" because there were a lot of different cultures, including Samoan girls who were much bigger than she. "I couldn't adapt," she recalled, "so I reverted back to what I knew best, which was hanging out with my 'Ewa friends and being comfortable around Filipinos." One of the other participants I interviewed, Rebecca, also mentioned being more comfortable around her friends from 'Ewa and chose to remain within a circle of people from 'Ewa when she was in high school.

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I attended Waipahu Intermediate School and also found myself in an environment that was different from what I was accustomed to at Waipahu Elementary School. All the public elementary schools (August Ahrens, Honowai, and Waipahu) fed into Waipahu Intermediate. Interestingly, the student population at the intermediate school was less ethnically diverse than in elementary school. The various ethnic groups mingled less than we did in elementary. Granted, the student body at Waipahu Intermediate School was predominantly comprised of Filipino and Japanese, which meant that the students divided into groups that would have more students from one or the other of these two ethnic groups. However, this was not the norm for me based on my experience in elementary school. In fact, as I recall, I was closest to my Japanese classmates. I

think we grew close because we were in the same groups. I missed them when they transferred to other schools, which contributed to my difficulty in adjusting to my new social and academic environment.

I formed new friendships and became close to two of my classmates from the other elementary schools. One was Filipino, someone who emigrated from the Philippines with her family like I did. She lived in 'Ewa Beach but also attended school in Waipahu. My other classmate was someone whose mother emigrated from Japan. They were tremendous sources of social support throughout intermediate and high schools. My Japanese friend was especially supportive, encouraging, and helpful in assisting me to navigate the academic demands and social pressures of being a high school student of immigrant parents. She once stood with me at a pay phone in front of the high school as I called a helpline, for which she provided the number so I could seek guidance on how to handle pressures from my parents and peers.

In the eighth grade, I was determined to pull myself out of my seventh-grade doldrums. Mrs. Loo, my eighth grade English teacher, was a significant force at a pivotal point in my life. She was also the advisor for the school's literary magazine, In Motion, on which I served as the editor. I am forever indebted to Mrs. Loo for recognizing my potential and for setting high expectations for me to meet; this propelled me to emerge out of my shell and to reclaim my voice. Words were the window to other worlds and possibilities for me. I wrote a poem about freedom; and to my surprise, it was the winning student work that year. Freedom and equality were themes that continued to be central to my educational and career paths.

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"Modern" and "brainiacs" are terms Rose used to describe the group with whom she hung out with. The name "brainiacs" refers to the bookish and studiousness of her group to which she

belonged. "Modern" refers to "locals" who were born and raised in Hawai'i and consisted of a mix of cultures. They wore more up-to-date clothing, and read English language magazines such as *Seventeen*. The "less modern" Filipino immigrants who had thick accents, dressed in mismatched colors, and read Philippine language magazines such as *Bannawag*, and they were referred to as "fresh off the boat" (FOB). They brought lunch to school rather than buy school lunch. Rose observed that they had difficulty with their studies because they were not proficient in English. Her tone did not convey any ill will. It was almost as though she was oblivious to the effect her words could have had on an immigrant. She was aware, however, of the stigma associated with the term "fresh off the boat." They were easily distinguishable, being loud and boisterous, she said. According to Rose, the immigrant students would always hang out at the front gate of Campbell, along North Road near the administration building immediately to the left. The local Filipinos hung out on the opposite side of the building in the shade. "We didn't socialize because we were not into the same things," Rose indicated. Navigating the various social networks in high school is an important skill. Rose mentioned differences between the group she belonged to and the immigrant students. Although the two groups did not interact, there was a tolerance for each other's differences.

Coming from a sheltered upbringing, and a predominantly Filipino community, Rose was overwhelmed with the diversity of cultures and ethnic groups she encountered. She relied on her network of close friends and said, "I reverted back to what I knew best, which was hanging out with my 'Ewa friends and being comfortable around Filipinos." Some of the participants I interviewed relied on their network of friends to navigate the school environment, and for guidance in applying to college. In Rose's case, her peer network helped her to navigate the social environment but it was her teacher, Mr. Itakazu, who was the most instrumental in paving

the way for her to go to college and become a nurse. Unbeknownst to Rose, Mr. Itakazu, had submitted an application on her behalf for the nursing program at Kapiolani Community College (KCC). A letter accepting her into the nursing program a month after she graduated from high school in 1988 stunned Rose. She vaguely remembered signing a form that her high school teacher said was for a test, which she assumed was for an application to KCC but not specifically into the nursing program. She wanted to be a fashion designer and thought the form was for a fashion design program. Laughing, Rose exclaimed, "He must have seen in me something that [made him think] 'oh this girl might be a nurse.'"

Rose had not taken classes in high school and was underprepared for the nursing program. She struggled. "I wanted to be a fashion designer, hated [the nursing program], didn't want to work with older people, didn't want to do nursing," she recalled. At the end of the first semester in college, she dropped out. When she dropped out of college, her father pointed out that she had a loan to pay. To help fund the cost of college, she had taken out a loan with Ewa Credit Union, the only bank she knew. She was only seventeen and her father had to co-sign for her. Consequently, she obtained a certificate as a Certified Nurse's Assistant (CNA) and worked as CNA at Hale Nani Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, so she could repay her loan. This was where she discovered that she "was meant to be a nurse." She recalled the moment when one of the residents in the nursing home, who resembled her grandmother, touched her face as she was assisting the resident and said, "You're really a good person." Rose said "The moment was profound and it changed my attitude." She realized that nursing was what she was meant to do. "All it took was for someone to acknowledge . . . that I was actually doing the right thing," she said. This was a turning point for her as she recognized it was time to grow up, to stop thinking about herself, and accept to what she was meant to do.

Subsequently, Rose left her job at Hale Nani and re-enrolled in the nursing program at KCC. She continued her studies with a rejuvenated spirit and boundless energy. She has never looked back and went on to obtain her associates degree and bachelor's degree in nursing. Being a first-generation college student posed challenges at each phase of her journey: applying to college, transitioning to college, navigating the college environment, and finding the right career. Her path became clear in an unexpected moment. Trusting herself and her instincts have been importance sources of navigational capital for Rose.



*Like Rose, I turn to my faith when I am facing challenges. And through my experiences, I learned that faith and logic do not always co-exist harmoniously. Moreover, having faith does not always flow naturally, and being able to discern the best course of action can be elusive. My undergraduate education in journalism and political science put me on a straight course to law school, or so I thought. My two classmates in my journalism classes and my good friend who lived next door to me in the residence hall, who were all interested in law school, helped me navigate the law school application process. I attended an informational session, but did not personally know anyone who was a lawyer and I was hesitant to speak with an adviser at the UH law school and to be potentially scrutinized before I actually submitted my application. Surprisingly, I was accepted to five law schools and I decided to attend the University of Oregon because it had a great program for minority students. Furthermore, one of my friends who helped me with my application would be going there. In addition, another friend's brother was also going to attend.*

*I visited the University of Oregon during the summer after my graduation from college in 1985 and was set to enroll in the fall semester. Unexpectedly, Gonzaga University School of Law*

*called and offered me a full scholarship. The high cost of attending law school out-of-state was a major consideration so I decided to go to Gonzaga. Also, the university is a Catholic school and I thought it would have a supportive environment. Located in Spokane, Washington, Gonzaga is far from the coast and the cultural diversity that surrounded me in Hawai'i. Although I had a friend from Hawai'i who was also attending the same law school, and I met others who befriended me and extended their support, I kept my social network to a small group of friends and cloistered myself in my studies.*

*Disconnected from my community in Hawai'i and ill-equipped to bridge it to the new environment and culture of Gonzaga and Spokane, I thought it would help if I transferred to a school with a stronger focus on civil rights. I was accepted to the University of Notre Dame Law School as a transfer student for the following year and registered for fall classes, but two days later, I was on a plane back to Hawai'i. It was a defining moment for me; I followed my "gut" instinct and acted without consulting my parents. I studied one more semester at the UH School of Law before resigning myself to the realization that it was not meant to be. There were extenuating circumstances that led to my academic dismissal, but I felt at the time that ultimately I was responsible for my performance. The committee that reviewed my appeal for reconsideration of my dismissal denied my request. Accepting their decision, I chose not to appeal to the entire faculty. The committee was not convinced, and neither was I, of my interest or my ability to continue law. In reality, I knew I was burned out; I was uncertain about my choice of career path because of my lack of passion for the process of studying law, and constrained by the thought that my future would be set if I continued in law.*

*Of course, it was a huge disappointment to me, my parents, and my community. When someone from church said, "I thought you were going to be the one to make it," his words stung.*

*At the same time, I felt my experience was not a total loss. Mingled with a feeling of failure, I also felt a glimmer of hope, and faith, that all would turn out fine. Being part of a close-knit community has its advantages, but as Rose indicated, there are times when the scrutiny is too great to bear. Consequently, I retreated inward from my community and family to the island of Hawai'i where I found solace in nature, new challenges, and new relationships that expanded my social network. My family insisted on maintaining close contact and paid me two surprised visits during my first two months in Hilo. I also kept in touch with my friends on O'ahu who helped me complete courses that I was taking before relocating. My friends borrowed, made copies, and sent me the videotapes that I needed to view for my class. Because of my aspiration to learn, and the support of my family, friends, and colleagues, I was able to navigate my way forward.*



Linguistic capital encompasses a myriad of ways of communicating other than the structured system of communication used by a distinct community or country. Rose understood *Ilokano*, the native language of her mother and grandmother. While this is an important source of linguistic capital, Rose is also alert to other mediums of communication in nature, and she looks to the environment for symbols and messages. Upon her deathbed, Rose's grandmother asked her, "When I die, how do you want me to come to you? . . . What's the sign you want me to give you . . . so you know it's me and you don't get scared?" Rose told her grandmother "I'll be fine as long as you do not appear as a ghost." They agreed on a pink rose and dragonfly as symbols to represent Rose's grandmother—a rose since it is Rose's favorite flower, and a dragonfly because her grandmother liked it.

Over the years, whenever Rose sees pink roses in flower arrangements, sprouting from shrubs, or imprinted on business cards, they invariably remind her to say "hi" to her grandmother, which she does. Her grandmother has made her presence known in the form of a dragonfly. She shared her encounter with a persistent dragonfly outside at a First Hawaiian Bank in Pearlridge while she was sitting in her car:

It was early in the morning and this huge golden dragonfly kept flying across my windshield. And it was like hitting it enough that it was making . . . a mark, and it was making a sound so I didn't want to go out because I thought it was going to bite me. So I just kind of watched it and it was going back and forth. And it stopped at eye level. It just looked at me and I was kind of like go away. And it circled my car and flew off. [I] didn't think anything of it.

That afternoon I went to go see my psychic and the psychic did this motion. . . . She was going on. Fly by your window, and fly by your window. I looked at her. . . ; I wasn't understanding her. . . I looked at her like 'oh,' and she said 'dragonfly.' . . . And I looked at the psychic, and thought . . . 'Oh my God, that was this morning, how did you?' I didn't even tell my husband. And she said, 'your grandmother said it's her.'

Drawing upon this form of communication has continued to connect Rose with her grandmother. Being able to draw on multiple styles of communicating has helped her maintain her link to her grandmother and to an essential source of familial capital.

### **Conclusion**

Inspired, nurtured, and empowered by her family and community, Rose earned a bachelor's degree in nursing. She was motivated by the Sodalists dressed in blue and white who she saw in church and she perceived they were going to be "somebody" someday. Equally

impressed by their confidence and capacity to lead without needing boys, she could not wait to join Sodality. She credits her experience with Sodality as the catalyst that propelled her to overcome her shyness and to help her build the confidence to reach her goals. Her journey towards becoming a nurse was not a straight path, but she trusted in God and did not lose her faith. "I don't want to hear you say you can't do it" or "If there's a will, there's a way," were empowering words from her father and grandmother, which enabled her to persevere. "Step back and look at it again, you're going to see the solution in a different way," her father also advised her, and "You don't have to think inside the box, there's always outside the box." Rose was fortunate to have an extensive network of family, peers, teachers, and community members whom she relied on for support and who were sources of these forms of capital: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistance, and linguistic.



## CHAPTER 7

### RAQUEL

Friendly. Genuine. Trustworthy. Leader. These are words that aptly describe Raquel, who recently retired in 2018 from her Master Sergeant and an Equal Opportunity Specialist position in the U.S. Air National Guard. Driven by her parents' struggles and hopes for their children, inspired by her older brother's creative brilliance, and guided by all the different "angels" throughout her life, she has soared higher than she ever conceived as a girl raised in 'Ewa Plantation Town. Her father encouraged her "always to do good, to strive, and to try to better yourself," motivating her to do her best. She said she wanted to please her parents and make them proud, but she also wanted to do it for herself. In other words, her efforts were both extrinsically and intrinsically motivated. Possessing and cultivating the six forms of community cultural wealth—aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistance, and linguistic—has led Raquel the furthest away from 'Ewa but the place and its people remain close to her heart.

Raquel had a penchant for actively getting involved in student activities and seeking leadership roles. Being elected to be in charge of the Junior Police Officers (JPO) in elementary school was the beginning of a lifelong calling to lead. She recognized early on that in order to bring an idea to fruition, "you have to be able to be put in a role where you can [have] an influence." Student government positioned her to make decisions or get people involved. "I craved to belong to a group of individuals who wanted to do better . . . and it kept me motivated and out of trouble," Raquel recalled. Another keen insight she had was of the power of labels. "When you put labels on people, they tend to believe of themselves in a certain way," she observed. If it is a negative label, it can be detrimental. However, she believes "if you look at the good parts of what they can do, and develop on those things, they can be anybody." Although

Raquel was aware of the negative labels and stereotypes about Campbell High School and students there, she refused to let it define her. Aspirational capital, navigational capital and resistance capital were forms of community cultural wealth that Raquel possessed to a high degree, which were instrumental in helping her to mitigate the common misconceptions.

Raquel's positive attitude, sense of empowerment to reach her full potential, and desire to fulfill her parents' aspirations for her and her siblings to have a better life, challenged the characteristics that the term "plantation mentality" implies. The term is used to describe someone with a complacent and subservient attitude, along with an inferiority complex, similar to the mindset that some believed to be present in the paternalistic environment of Hawai'i's sugar plantations. A "plantation mentality" was not evident in what Raquel shared about her experiences in 'Ewa.

Cataluna, a playwright and columnist for the Honolulu Star-Advertiser who writes thought-provoking stories about local culture provides a counterpoint to the term "plantation mentality" that, perhaps, sheds light into Raquel's own experience. Cataluna (2016) admonishes people who write of plantation life as oppressive and paternalistic. She wrote, "There are times when I hear people talk disparagingly about life on Hawaii's sugar plantations, and I don't recognize anything they're saying. I think that's because they didn't live it." In Cataluna's experience, she has "never heard a person who actually worked in sugar speak bitterly about paternalism or oppression or terrible working conditions. The only people who rail about how bad sugar workers had it are people who did not grow up in sugar families."

Although Cataluna's perspective might not be representative of all families who grew up on the plantation, after all, her father was a manager while the fathers of the participants were in non-managerial positions, the women whom I interviewed generally had fond memories of

plantation life and the positive influence it had in developing a strong sense of belonging and identity. The nurturing environment that empowered Raquel and the women to strive and reach for their goals was in stark contrast to the earlier paternalistic structure of the plantation, in which working and living conditions were oppressive. Filipino and Japanese workers, led-by ILWU, joined forces and went on strike in the late 1940s to the 1950s for improved living and working conditions. "Filipinos on the plantations were greatly politicized and made important contributions to the struggle of all working people in Hawaii for greater democratic rights" (Alegado, 1991, p. 19). The generations that followed benefitted greatly from their great sacrifices.

For Raquel, being raised in a close-knit plantation community was an important source of social capital. As the first among the seven siblings in her family to earn a college degree, this chapter is focused on her. From time to time I also discuss her sister Kitty's relevant experiences since she and Raquel are close in age. Also, Kitty's perspective substantiates, as well as presents, an alternative view of plantation life.

Their family moved to Varona Village in 'Ewa from Waipahu when Raquel was in the fifth grade. One of the main differences between the two communities that she noticed was the nearby presence of the sugar mill in 'Ewa right where they lived, which was in the center of the town and along the only road that led to the family's home. She recalled the lifestyle being different in 'Ewa, but it might have had more to do with her just being uprooted at the end of the school year and transitioning to a new place. Once Raquel adjusted to her new environment, she felt the same sense of closeness within the community. She described 'Ewa as a safe community—the neighbors were friendly, all knew each other, and were there for you if you needed anything. High school, middle school, and elementary school students felt secure walking

the streets of 'Ewa and waiting at the bus stops. Gabriela's sister, Alhambra, also alluded to how safe she felt when she was growing up in 'Ewa, compared to today when it would be unlikely for young kids to walk to elementary school by themselves.

Raquel formed friendships with the youth in the neighborhood and they all had a good time. They got together at each other's houses or everybody met at the park and played dodge ball, kickball, or other types of outdoor activity. These activities were some of the favorite past times. "It was a pretty fun childhood," she recalled. They did not have the technology that is available today to stay in touch, so she would eagerly go to her friend's house after she finished her chores, knock on her door, and ask, "Hey, can you come out to play?" If her friend could not play, there was usually someone else to play with, she said, laughing. Weekend parties were also favorites of hers. "The whole neighborhood, the community, was invited, or even if you weren't invited, you could go and they [party host] didn't mind you going to the party and picking up food. . . . You can't find that anymore," Raquel recalled with a hint of nostalgia. She loved the weddings best of all because of the live bands. As described by another participant, Rebecca, preparations for parties were a group effort. Anyone who wanted to help was welcome to assist. The food was prepared at the social club and at neighbors' homes. Cooking the *lechon*, roasted pig, was a joint effort of a group of men who sat around and drank beer for hours as they turned the spit over an open fire.

The family's move to 'Ewa was more difficult on Kitty than it was on Raquel. Kitty's experiences, both positive and difficult, cultivated resilience and contributed to navigational capital. She found the 'Ewa girls to be "rough," and she constantly got into physical fights with them until she proved herself. She recalled wandering the neighborhood "unsupervised, having fun, getting into fights, and playing." Kitty engaged in "chit chat" with everyone and recalled one

of the men, in particular, who liked to read books and they had conversations about self-improvement and positive thinking. Interestingly, she seemed unaffected by the gambling she observed and cigarettes she purchased from her neighbor's "Mom and Pop" store for her parents. There were also the fun times playing in the irrigation ditches, hunting for bottles with her oldest sister, and sneaking a taste of fresh sugarcane cut from sugarcane fields. Kitty said, these were not novel activities but were just part of the community happenings. Some of the things that set her apart from Raquel and her peers were her obsession with reading books, and curiosity to learn about places, people, and just about everything. Kitty could not find other people like her who shared the same unquenchable thirst to delve deep into a subject of interest. She reflected she was "putting a square in a round peg" and never quite fit in. Despite the strict rules that her parents imposed, she pushed the boundaries and did what she wanted to do, anyway.

Raquel viewed 'Ewa as an idyllic place to live. Although money was scarce, her father always organized family outings. She said, "Growing up in the plantation we didn't have a whole lot of money." However, her father took the family on picnics to Hans L'Orange Park or to McDonald's to just play and have a good time. It was simple and did not cost much, but it meant a lot because it gave the family a chance to spend time together. Having her parents around for family activities was precious to her and her siblings. It showed us that "they were involved in our lives," and they were not just focused on work, Raquel reflected. On paydays, her father took the family out to dinner at a restaurant such as Flamingo's in Pearl City or Wong Kung Chop Suey in Waipahu. This became a special ritual for the family.

Raquel is also a descendant of *Sakadas*, and both her parents were born in Hawai'i. However, her father's family moved to the Philippines when he was just a child, and he returned to Hawai'i as an adult. His formative years were spent in the Philippines, and like many

immigrants, he held dreams for a better life for his family. While Raquel has strong ties to her father's side of the family, she is not as familiar with relatives on her mother's side. Raquel's maternal grandparents were not together for very long, and her maternal grandfather was not present in her life.

Raquel's parents wanted more for their children beyond what they could provide, doing what they could to ensure that their children had a bright future. According to Kitty, their parents had definite plans for Raquel and her. They hoped that Raquel would be a teacher, and Kitty a nurse. They did the best they could with the resources they had, and stressed education as the key to a better life. Raquel's parents, each with about eight siblings, did not have the opportunity to finish high school because they had to work to help support their families. Her father reinforced the value and importance of education by saying, "You got to study. Make sure you do this, or make sure you do that." Raquel got very emotional when she talked about her parents' dream for their children, and the difficulties they endured.

Raquel's family's history of struggle to overcome their circumstances stoked her own aspirations and was a source of aspirational capital and familial capital, leading her to be the first in her family of seven children to earn a bachelor's degree. Majoring in elementary education was a natural fit with her passion to make a difference in the lives of children and others. Although Raquel pursued a path that diverged from a teaching career, she has had a tremendous impact on the lives of people in the military as an Equal Opportunity Office director for the National Guard. She has assisted individuals with complaints of unlawful discrimination and addressed any issues or concerns to ensure a professional work environment. Before she embarked on her graduate studies, she thought to herself, "'Oh man, I will have surpassed my goal' because all I wanted was a degree, an associate's degree."

Taking a more circuitous route, after three starts at three different colleges in her attempt to become a nurse, Kitty found her niche and earned her bachelor's degree in information systems and a master's degree in business administration and management. It was a chance encounter with a cousin she admired, and considered to be one of the smart ones among her relatives, that propelled her to switch her course of study. She was surprised to see her cousin back in school since her cousin already had a Filipino restaurant and drove a BMW. When Kitty inquired about why her cousin had returned to school, her cousin replied that she was doing it for herself. What her cousin said about computers being the future excited Kitty, and she was emboldened to close the door on nursing and changed her major. Kitty's cousin was a source of familial capital, a role model who, through the story of her own journey, helped Kitty decide on a career path.

Involvement with Sodality, church choir, student government, and creative pursuits coalesced and formed the foundation on which Raquel's goals were formed and nurtured. Being part of Immaculate Conception Church (ICC) played a critical role in Raquel's journey and was a source of familial capital, as well as social capital. With 'Ewa being such a closeknit community, and a high rate of families attending church, church and family activities were interconnected and the church was very much part of the extended family from which the participants gained wisdom, learned values, and listened to stories to guide them. She said, "There's a connection in the things that we did later in life because of what was introduced to us at the church." Raquel and Kitty attended church regularly, and on special religious occasions the entire family went to church. One of the older teenagers who was like a big brother to many of the youth in the community took the sisters under his wing and gave them rides to church. Becoming actively involved in church was the impetus for Raquel joining Sodality.

Sodality provided another community that was a powerful force in Raquel's life during her formative years. Raquel would proudly walk into church dressed in her white gown, blue cape, and beanie with the other Sodalists on the Sundays they attended mass together. To her, the outfit was representative of a person who believed in God and humbly represented the church in a way that was respectful. Raquel explained, Sodality was like an "elite group that you were in," and she felt honored to be part of it. This is why, she said, that it was a "big deal to actually be part" of [Sodality]. A sense of belonging was fostered within the group, which she felt was especially important for youths as they left elementary school and faced a variety of challenges in their lives. She opined, "when there's a sense of belonging to a group where you feel accepted and you're loved, and you do things together, to me, that goes a long way." Just being together and having a good time could be a reprieve from whatever it was that the Sodalists might be worried about.

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I experienced what Raquel and the other girls did attending Sodality Sunday mass together and walking in the procession. I felt the powerful, empowering bond we shared. I also felt exalted being part of a group that was striving to do good, and having earned the respect, goodwill, and support of the church community.

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As mentioned by the other Sodalists, Raquel also recognized the two Sodality advisers as outstanding role models who were "always kind and loving." They genuinely cared about the Sodalists and dedicated their time to helping them develop as "young ladies." The advisers were always available to help, demonstrating their character, what they stood for and believed in, and what they were trying to instill and teach the Sodalists. Raquel echoed the same sentiments that



the advisers identified as their purpose and role—to teach the Sodalists about the church and to be good citizens. Although I presented Raquel's and the other participants' recollections of role of the advisers and what they learned from them, it was Kitty's portrayal of the advisers and her interpretations of her experience as a Sodalist that captured the essence of the Sodality experience.

Kitty joined Sodality because her good friend's sisters and her sister were part of the group. On one of the all-girls' retreat, she remembered the advisers comparing the Sodalists to diamonds. They told us that "we need to take really good care of ourselves, and to always remember that we're diamonds," Kitty said. She interpreted it to mean that the Sodalists were special and "so when you're special, you need to make sure that . . . you live a good life and you have God in your life." Also, they instilled the "value that you were your own person who believes in God and [to] . . . stand up for yourself as a woman, or as a girl." The advisers encouraged the Sodalists, as young adults, to be independent and offered uplifting words to empower them. "It's almost like woman's liberation, but in a different kind of way—like "girl power."

The church provided another avenue for Raquel to expand her social network through the music ministry and was a source of social capital. Her desire to be part of the church choir sparked her interest in music and motivated her to learn to play the guitar. A friend from her village, who was part of the choir, taught her how to play the instrument. Although Raquel did not consider herself a great guitar player, she was honored to be in the choir. Both of them also practiced the piano together. Her friend was musically talented and developed into an excellent keyboard player and went on to play professionally. The two, along with a mutual friend who was also part of the choir and a high school classmate, formed a group and competed in the high

school statewide musical talent competition "Brown Bags to Stardom." She has long since forgotten the name of the song they performed, but remembers being on stage and having a good time. Raquel's interest in music and musical performance connected her with peers and was a key source of social capital. Furthermore, it cultivated linguistic capital that allowed her to express herself using a different modality. Music can convey hopes, feelings, and challenges that are not easily captured in words.

During middle school and high school, Raquel remained close to the youth from 'Ewa and congregated with them in the same area at school. However, she was also a free spirit and circulated with different peer groups and declared to everyone "you're my friend." Her social network grew even wider through her involvement with student government, as she got to know others from different areas of 'Ewa, 'Ewa Beach, and Makakilo. Raquel developed her "own little community just like Sodality. The student government enabled me to be a part of a special group of individuals who wanted to strive and do good and participate in school activities," she said. Community was very important to Raquel, evident by the way she intentionally initiated relationships and brought her peers together to form groups. In her first attempt to get involved with student government, she ran for eighth grade vice president and lost against a boy she described as "good looking." All the girls liked him so he won, she recalled with a laugh. Raquel relished being in leadership roles. Her older brother was student government president for his high school and he inspired her to get involved with student activities. The defeat just encouraged her to try again in high school, and was victorious in being elected vice president in her sophomore and junior years. and was elected president in her senior year. Unfortunately, she had to resign in order to be able to work to afford the cost to participate in the student activities. I did not detect Raquel having any regret with her decision. Throughout the interview, I got the

sense that she was undaunted by the challenges she faced. Somehow, she found a way to navigate the situations she encountered.

Raquel also stood up for others. She did not tolerate seeing others get picked on and being mistreated. There was an incident in middle school of a student who kept making fun of a girl because she was white and overweight. Witnessing the student being called "names" really made Raquel mad. "I got tired of that person picking on her because, you know, it was starting to affect her," she recalled. The girl was not eating—starving herself because she was trying to lose weight. Raquel was concerned so she demanded of the culprit, "You leave her alone! . . . Stop messing with her." When she got to high school there were fights, which sometimes involved White students. She felt bad for those who were mistreated because of the color of their skin.

In high school, Raquel surrounded herself with people who wanted to do good. She formed supportive communities that were valuable sources of social capital and helped her develop navigational capital. Floating from group to group of students, she said she loved "being with different types of people." Raquel avoided stereotyping people based on their physical appearances, and made it a point to get to know them as individuals. She said, "You find out all these wonderful things that people can do and these individuals enhance your life and your experiences because they teach you things that you probably never have known before." Also, there are "angels," who can guide you, but you have to be open to it.

However, not everyone were as adept in cultivating social networks or as open as Raquel to diversity and accepting differences. Campbell High School was stigmatized for being rough, and also for having Filipinos students who were part of gangs and carried knives. There were fights, which sometimes involved white students. Raquel felt bad for those who were mistreated

because of the color of their skin. Stereotypes about Campbell and Filipinos lingered in the back of her mind. The students were perceived as "from the wrong side of town and. . . sort of wild."

It could have easily made affected her confidence and self-concept, essential qualities to promote the various forms of community cultural wealth. Raquel compared the perceptions people had of Campbell to the what she knew of the school and the students—it did not match up. She reflected on biases:

It made me feel like we weren't good enough. . . . because we were categorized in such a way where "Oh, you know, those are the kids that are from the country." [N]ot that it's said. Sometimes a lot of things are not said, you know what I mean? You have to read between the lines. [I]t's that we just weren't up to par with certain schools, say like Mililani or schools from Downtown, that kind of stuff.

Raquel used her resistance capital to challenge the assumptions that were made about Campbell and her fellow students. Her experiences in middle school and high school, combined with navigational skills such as open-mindedness, critical thinking, self-awareness, confidence, and leadership skills, led her to reject the stereotypes and labels.

Raquel's interests in diversity, curiosity, desire to make a difference, open-mindedness, and strong sense of identity were greatly influenced by her older brother who she described as "very humble. He's very creative. He loves to make people happy. He's just brilliant." A talented painter and entertainer, he made ideas come alive, Raquel recalled excitedly. The entire family got involved, including their mother, making decorations for special holidays, school projects, and promotional materials for student government campaigns. With very little money, they had to be resourceful and think outside of the box. Besides her parents, her brother was the most instrumental in guiding her throughout her formative years. Everything about him was just so

infectious that she wanted to be like him, but she had to find her own way on how to do it. Art, as a form of expression and communication, was a source of linguistic capital that opened Raquel's worldview. She drew on the skills she gained working on creative projects to understand, interpret, and engage with the world.

The individualized attention that Raquel's teachers bestowed upon her helped to develop social capital and navigational capital. There were teachers and advisers who saw certain qualities in her, and invested their time to develop her as a leader. However, it was not until a serendipitous encounter with her friend's date, who was in the military and came dressed in his uniform to the prom, that the idea of the military as a viable option to fund her college expenses occurred to her. This illustrates how informal networks are just as valuable sources of social capital and navigational capital as resources specifically established to guide students with their educational and career goals. He made an impression on her with his personality, and so she inquired about the military. He told her, "This is what you need to do. I can set you up with this person or colonel."

Going to college was always Raquel's goal. She started working during the summers when she was only 13 years old and worked part-time throughout her junior and senior years in high school. At that time she was earning only \$3.35 an hour and knew that college would require a larger income. The military route presented an opportunity for her to achieve her goal. Petite in stature and weighing only 95 pounds, her family could not picture her in the military. "But I knew in my mind that I have to do something to get me through college. . . . And the military was the key for me. " She was aware there were scholarships for college, but she did not have the best grades because of work and involvement in student government and believed she

would not qualify. It was "my choice," she said. "That's the way it happened and I had to work, that was definitely something I had to do."

Upon joining the military, Raquel's ability to cultivate and nurture relationships enabled her to build a social network, which helped her navigate an institution that was completely unfamiliar to her, and eventually adjust to the new environment. Going into the military, Raquel did not know what to expect. "I had to experience that all on my own, and it was the best thing that ever happened to me because of all of the opportunities and experiences that led me to where I'm at today." She declared, the military "afforded me the opportunity of [pursuing a] higher education, which was my very first goal of why I joined the military in the first place."

Raquel reflected, "I never would have thought that my involvement with the military would have gotten me this far . . . never in my wildest dreams." Placed at the military headquarters of her unit at the start of her career, she worked with individuals who were at the top of the military structure. She was exposed to people who had professional jobs outside the military, such as teachers, principals, professors, bankers, and pilots. Raquel remembers wanting to be "like them, too, because they were so successful." It opened the door to all types of careers that she probably would not have become familiar with had she not joined the military. The exposure to a broad spectrum of professionals and occupations introduced her to a "whole new world of thinking." She credited her supervisors for mentoring her by laying the foundation for her development as a leader. They shared specific kernels of advice, prefacing it with "This is what you need to do. This is how you do it. This is how you become successful." Her social network was an indispensable reservoir of social capital that informed her about how to navigate the military culture and life in general.

Despite her interpersonal skills, Raquel held a belief that she had to overcome when she joined the military. "I was afraid to join the military because I was quiet," she reflected. In her view, this statement did not contradict her self-description as a "social butterfly," because what she meant was that she grew up with the idea of not voicing contrary views. She surmised that her behavior was due to her strict upbringing and firmly ingrained Filipino value of respect for elders, other people, and authority. Being highly conscious of these values often made her feel "confined." It took many years for her to "learn how to speak up and . . . not just to agree with everything." Learning to adapt to her military environment and reframing her understanding of respect was a significant aspect of the resistance capital that she developed.

As a Filipino and female, Raquel has often had to prove herself. It can make things difficult, but this does not deter her. She loves the challenge and asserts the knowledge, skills, and experiences that were taught to her as a child and young adult have provided her with the ability to bring people together. It has also allowed her to accomplish it and build a community "where people feel like they're accepted and wanted." Coming from Hawai'i with a high percentage of Asians, she had to contend with people in Georgia who had never seen a Filipino. She also struggled with culture shock there. She recalled that it was difficult to fit in "because the first thing that people saw was what you looked on the outside. . . . Some people didn't know how to react to me" because the population in Georgia is largely black and white. People wondered if she spoke English.

According to Raquel, we "can do anything that we want to do if we set our minds to it." As she did when growing up in 'Ewa, she surrounded herself in Georgia with a community of supportive people. If none existed, she formed one. This is what she did in order to navigate the cultural divide and counter the isolation that could have blocked her educational and career path.

According to Raquel, being open and inclusive are core elements to building any community. She learned this from Sodality—bringing together like-minded individuals who are committed to the creation of a welcoming, caring, and nurturing space where a person can be safe. Regardless of their diverse backgrounds, they endeavored to understand each other's differences and recognize their similarities.

When she graduated from Armstrong State College (now part of Georgia Southern University) in Savannah, Georgia, there were only two Asians. This gives a glimpse of the lack of diversity at the institution. The campus climate was unfamiliar to Raquel, and she found it challenging to find her way. "It was scary for me because I didn't like to be judged. . . . I looked different [and] I sounded different. . . . I wasn't a part of the groups because of the color of my skin or my ethnicity, or because I was female," she reflected. To be accepted by fellow students, Raquel made it a point to talk to people in her class and get to know them. Soon she won people over with her outgoing, friendly personality, and everyone knew her. The key was treating others in a way that she wanted to be treated. "Most of the people that I went to college with in Georgia were responsive because they were wanting to be successful, as well," she recalled.

These days Raquel uses diplomacy in her role as an Equal Opportunity Office director to ensure the fair treatment of all soldiers and airmen in the U.S. National Guard. Raquel's greatest passion is promoting diversity. She has dedicated her life to ensuring equal opportunities for individuals regardless of their backgrounds. Her achievements and desire to do better in life are inextricably linked to her appreciation for diversity and efforts to cultivate communities that are open and inclusive. She has faced, and risen above, adversities because of her minority status as a female and Filipino. Determination and willingness to work hard have been vital to her



accomplishments. "It's not handed down to you. You have to work hard for it," Raquel declared. A key advice she shares with the youth is to "put yourself out there. Teach yourself how to get to know people in different places."

### **Conclusion**

Raquel's experiences parallel the lives of the other participants, yet it also differs in significant ways. For one thing, she is the only participant who joined the military. Being in the military gave her the advantage of receiving tailored mentoring and a roadmap for her personal and professional development. This has been a vital source of social capital and navigational capital. Also, an older brother was instrumental in not only being a positive role model but a mentor who shared his experiences and knowledge about student government and engaged her in his passion for the arts. He was a constant presence in her life, providing excellent pointers and emotional support. Her brother's artistic influence, and Raquel's involvement with the church music ministry, fostered the medium of art as valuable linguistic capital to communicate and broaden her horizons.

Raquel's aspirations were founded on her parents' hopes for her and her siblings, and she is humbled and happy to be able to continue her parents' legacy in supporting her sons' own aspirations. By cultivating aspirational capital and familial capital in her sons, she is passing on her parents' legacy. Raquel demonstrated her courage and resistance capital in middle school when she stood up for herself and a classmate who were being mistreated. Being Filipino and female, she faced adversities in the workforce and college, which she survived by utilizing resistance capital and navigational capital to build a supportive community. "I don't need those approvals

anymore from some people. . . . If you like me, fine. If you don't like me, that's okay, too. But I'm going to surround myself [with] people who are positive and they're out there wanting to make a difference," she declared.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **KATERI**

The smoke and ashes from the sugarcane burning during harvest season was a common sight in ‘Ewa Plantation Town. This ceased when the plantation closed down in 1995. As the smoke and ashes cleared, so did the vestiges of the sugar industry in the ‘Ewa plains. Kateri has vivid memories of the event and the impact it had on everyone since it coincided with the year she graduated from high school. It was the last thing she remembers of ‘Ewa before leaving for college. Gone were the trucks picking up the plantation workers from the different villages in the morning to go to work, or the whistle blowing to signal the beginning and ending of the workday. The workers were displaced and had to find employment outside of ‘Ewa. There were families that were uprooted from their homes and had to relocate elsewhere. The demise of the plantation, while not unexpected, left the former plantation workers and their families floundering. Everything was different. She did not experience the full impact, but she knew about uncertainties and chaos.

Kateri's childhood and adolescent years were chaotic, stressful, and volatile. In spite of her circumstances, she remained secure in her faith and overcame the adversities she faced. Putting her absolute trust in God shielded her from situations that could have easily taken her in a different direction. Instead, she survived this tumultuous period of her life relatively unscathed. She coped by constantly praying, which cultivated a wealth of aspirational capital, resistance capital, and navigational capital. Her maternal grandmother's involvement in her life, strong ties with her extended family, and available resources through her high school were important

sources of familial capital and social capital. Proficient in English, Hawaiian, and Pidgin (Hawai'i Creole), she was able to traverse the diverse social and cultural environments and cultivated linguistic capital.

Although she spent a lot of time in Varona Village where her grandparents lived, Kateri is the only participant in the study who did not live in either Varona or Fernandez where the other participants lived. Upon first moving to 'Ewa, her family settled in Renton Village. Renton was located a couple of houses from the 'Ewa Community Church, which was next to 'Ewa Elementary. They later moved to Tenney, the next village along Renton Road before Varona. Of all her sisters, the eldest was always with their grandmother, while Kateri and her two other sisters were usually together under their parents' care.

Kateri realized at seven or eight years old that she was different from all her siblings. "God had different plans for us," she said. The third of four girls in the family, she was an outlier in the group. Unlike her sisters, she loved to read and learn and did not desire to cut class, smoke cigarettes, or drink alcohol—normative risk factors for academic achievement in adolescents. Boys did not interest her. In contrast, her sisters engaged in all these risk factors. Her sister who is directly above her, and was very athletic, got married at 16 years old. The youngest sister was arrested when Kateri was in intermediate school. Their mother cried frequently because of her sisters' behaviors. She described her father and mother as strict and consistent in their parenting style. They enforced an 8 o'clock bedtime for the children and made sure family and friends left by this time whenever they had gatherings at their home. Kateri and her sisters got their share of "lickens" when they were disciplined. However, according to Kateri, her parents also smoked cigarettes. She said, "my father was a heavy drinker when I was younger and he drank every day when he came home from work. It wasn't excessive, it was like 'I had a hard day's work. I'll have

a beer with my brothers.'" Kateri described her parents' smoking and drinking as part of the situation with her sisters and did not make a note of it as a specific source of stress.

Identifying the characteristics that distinguishes Kateri from her sisters is fairly straightforward, but pinpointing the basis for the dissimilarities is more complex. They were essentially exposed to the same environmental factors and potentially the same forms of capital. Kateri and her two sisters were constantly in each other's company. However, the divergent paths the sisters pursued suggest that the various forms of capital influenced their journeys to various degrees. Kateri's personal qualities such as self-efficacy, grounded in her spirituality and religiosity, enabled her to use navigational capital and resistance capital to mediate the risk factors that she encountered.

Supportive relationships with adults also can moderate the effects of risk factors. Kateri and her siblings have a large extended family and interacted frequently with relatives. The entire family always prayed together on every holiday and special occasions. Kateri said, "We did pray as a family. We loved family gatherings, a lot of family gatherings. Just [about] every weekend there was somewhere to be, somebody's birthday, somebody's party." Besides praying, and playing volleyball, basketball, and baseball at the old Mahiko Park, someone always had a guitar and invariably there was singing. Her grandmother and uncles are musically talented. Kateri's grandmother played the piano and guitar by ear and her uncles had a band.

Kateri's grandmother had an even greater passion for prayer than she did for music. Her devotion to praying was a practice instilled in her by Kateri's great-grandmother, which Kateri's grandmother shared with all her children and grandchildren. "She's incredibly prayerful. Whenever I need prayers, I go straight to my grandma. I truly believe that she prays with all of her heart, and I know that her prayers reach heaven," Kateri said. Everyone in the extended

family prayed, which was a fundamental part of the household or family activities. Kateri's sisters were not as prayerful as she was. Reflecting on the differences between Kateri and her sisters, she surmises, "it's biological, almost. I don't know. I don't think it is environmental because we [sisters], clearly, were raised in the same household by the same parents."

According to Kateri, early exposure to prayer and nurturing from her grandmother might have influenced her more prayerful nature than her sisters'. She recalled her grandmother taking care of her when she suffered from asthma as a toddler. As an early childhood educator she said, "I know a lot about the brain and how it influences child development. Maybe I was sitting around Grandma's room and she was praying a lot . . . Maybe I heard [her pray] all the time." Undoubtedly, Kateri's grandmother played a significant role in modeling and cultivating Kateri's devotion to God, Christ, and Mary through prayer. However, it was not until she was in junior high that she embraced the Rosary. This was around the time that she joined Sodality and the Sodalists would pray the Rosary. Kateri realized that the Rosary was associated with Mary, and described it, along with her participation in Sodality, as the catalyst for her relationship with Mary.

Kateri found comfort in the Rosary and became as dedicated as her grandmother and great-grandmother in saying the Rosary on a daily basis. Just hearing the words of the prayers that make up the Rosary reminded her of God's Virgin Mary's love for her. Regardless of any wrongdoing or poor choices she had committed, it made her feel loved by God. She was reassured that she would be okay because of her belief in God. The effect prayer had on her optimistic outlook on life and her ability to navigate any obstacles can be understood by explained to me how Kateri's great-grandmother told her to just relax and seek the Lord whenever she felt down. She said that if she placed the Lord first in her heart, she would have

peace. Do not be judgmental and share regardless of how little you might have, her great-grandmother advised her grandmother. Kateri's grandmother adopted these values and taught them to her children and grandchildren. A focus on caring for others and their well-being, and coming together as a family to sing, play, or pray all contributed to an abundance of familial capital.

The turmoil that surrounded Kateri was alleviated to some extent by the strong ties she had with her extended family, especially by the loving and constant presence of her grandparents. Her grandparents' house was a haven not just for the family but also the youth in Varona, particularly the young men. Those who have moved away often seek out her grandmother to express their gratitude when they return home to visit. One was thankful for her grandparents opening their house to him and welcoming him with open arms. "If not for you, I don't think I would be where I am," he said to Kateri's grandmother. Kateri's grandmother showered the youths with love and affection and looked upon them as her own children. The feeling was reciprocal and one became an exceptionally gifted musician, and always invited her grandparents to his performances in Waikiki and introduced them as his Auntie and Uncle.

Music was a language style that was an invaluable outlet for the youth to channel their energies and express themselves. This aspect of linguistic capital developed social and personal skills that the youth may not have had the opportunity to do so in school. For those from families who were not accustomed to showing their affection physically or verbally, this manner of communication allowed them to display their emotions in a safe and acceptable way. Hallam (2010) found in her review of empirical evidence a "strong case for the benefits of active engagement with music throughout the lifespan" (p. 281). Among high school and college students, studies have shown being part of groups engaged in activities dealing with music or

making music is beneficial. These benefits include learning to support each other, demonstrating commitment, enhancing social skills, and developing a strong sense of self-esteem.

Kateri recalled singing alleluia—songs of worship and rejoicing—in church. She teaches her daughter songs that she learned from her grandmother. Her favorite religious song is about how a sunflower follows the movement of the sun from the east where it rises in the morning to west as it sets in the evening. The song is a metaphor for placing one's faith in God and staying focused on him throughout one's life. The lyrics tell about living simply, and with charity, honesty, and fidelity. It fittingly captures Kateri's perspective of God's role in her life and her desire to serve God



*The traditional and contemporary songs we sang in church instilled in me a deeper appreciation of, and connection with, God, my religion, and my spirituality. Music inspired, encouraged, and propelled me to be a better person. It also allowed me to be in touch with my emotions. In one of our church retreats for the youth, our religion teachers coached us in verbally expressing our love to our parents, family, and those we cared about through a song. The song started with the lyrics, "Have I told you lately that I love you? Have I told you lately that I care?" We sang it together as a group then practiced saying, "I love you," to each other. Many of us were uncomfortable and awkward with the exercise since it was not a common practice in our families to verbally express our love. With trepidation, I managed to muster enough courage to stand in front of my parents, look them in the eye, and say the three words. It was well received.*





Becoming part of Sodality was almost a certainty for Kateri. Her grandmother was involved with the church music ministry and her two sisters were already Sodalists. Her mother did not attend mass, but she made sure Kateri and her sisters got up on Sundays and went to church. Kateri said, "My sisters were not always happy to be part of it . . . but I loved being part of" [the Sodality procession]. The process of ironing her dress and putting on her blue cape before church appealed to her. She thought it was great. "I think I just liked being in church. Again it was peaceful, I felt at home. I just felt calm," she fondly recalled. She enjoyed participating and coordinating the variety of activities. She saw it as serving Christ, and pleasing to God. The purpose of Sodality was never expressly articulated; she joined because her grandmother and sisters were involved. Thinking about it now, she believes these are the primary functions of Sodality: 1) provide activities for the female youth that fostered a positive environment and 2) adopt and model the virtues of the Virgin Mary, especially love and modesty. As younger Sodalists, they followed the lead of the older Sodalists who had laid the groundwork and put things in place, making it easy for them to take over when it was their turn to assume responsibility.

Kateri's involvement with Sodality strengthened her relationship with Mary. She exclaimed, "Yes, it absolutely played a huge impact." It grew even stronger than her connection with Christ through her experience in Sodality, especially praying the Rosary and participating in the religious processions and feasts. The way she spoke of Mary suggests a bond that is closer, and seems more of a personal nature, than one would normally find Catholics relating to religious figures. This link to Mary, Christ, and God was as vital as a relationship with a human being and a source of familial capital that has served her well in high school, college, and career. Kateri did not explicitly mention the Sodalists and sisterhood as contributing to a greater sense of

belonging or confidence. Perhaps she had more exposure and opportunities to interact with adolescent girls within and outside of her extended family, thereby cultivating a social network and positive sense of well-being prior to joining Sodality. Recognizing early on that she was different, she could have just accepted this fact and developed a strong sense of self-esteem by the time she joined Sodality.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed Kateri's sister having a child at a very young age. This happened when Kateri was in junior high and her sister was in high school. Her sister had to step down from her leadership position in Sodality. The situation with Kateri's older sisters galvanized her parents to take a more active role in Kateri's education and they enrolled her at Kamehameha Schools.\* "My mom forced me to take the [entrance] test. I didn't want to go . . . I was very content at Ilima Intermediate. All my friends were there, I was part of the newsletter crew," she said. However, Kateri's mother insisted and told her, "No. You and [your sister] are taking the test, you have Hawaiian blood." Her mother's forceful intervention is a form of familial capital that was meant to enable Kateri to succeed in life. At the time, Kateri was 13 years old and would not have gone if she had a choice. Her parents were determined for Kateri to go to college and really started to push higher education when she reached ninth grade.

Kamehameha is a college preparatory school, which is the reason she believed her parents were so determined for her to attend. "The demands at Kamehameha Schools were just higher, and I think it prepared me better for the path that I am on now," said Kateri. The environment was more focused on academics, rich in the Hawaiian culture, and the

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\*Kamehameha Schools is a private charitable educational trust endowed by the will of Hawaiian princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, the great-granddaughter and last direct descendant of King Kamehameha I.

socioeconomic backgrounds of the students covered a wider range. They came from working class backgrounds similar to her family, which she added could even be classified as lower working class background. Other classmates had parents who were business owners, and were much wealthier. The students had great ambition and were "driven to go to college, to accomplish big," she said. However, after her freshman year at Kamehameha, she transferred to Campbell during her sophomore year because she did not want to take the physical education requirement at Kamehameha.

During her one year sabbatical from Kamehameha, as she put it, she had a great experience at Campbell. She felt at ease since she was from 'Ewa and knew the students from the town and her former classmates who attended Ilima Intermediate. Her cousins also went to school at Campbell. Her close circle of friends was studious, college-bound, and self-proclaimed "nerds." They went on to become doctors, educators, and administrators. Some of them are working abroad now. Although the resources that were available at Kamehameha were more abundant than what Campbell was able to provide, Kateri possessed an abundance of aspirational capital and familial capital that would have likely facilitated her ability to achieve her goals, regardless of which high school she graduated from. However, she said, "God had plans for me, and he made me go to school [at Kamehameha]," where she learned about financial resources that she applied for and received to help ease the financial burden of college tuition and other costs. Kateri also credited Kamehameha for helping her parents to navigate the college preparation and admissions process, which enabled them to better support her. They even moved to California to be closer to Kateri when she transferred from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH-Hilo) to San Jose State University.

Peace, defined as freedom from disturbance or quiet and tranquility, is a state of being that Kateri sought and strived to achieve. She found solace through prayer. When she was in high school she met a family friend, who was vacationing from San Francisco who exuded a peaceful presence. "Her love of Christ was very strong and she was very prayerful just like my grandmother," said Kateri. She described the family friend as a "sweet, genuinely kind woman, very intelligent, incredibly smart, encouraging, and had nothing bad or negative to say about anything or anyone." Kateri considered the family friend like an aunt, since she was the wife of her grandfather's brother-in-law. Her aunt was a significant and influential person in her life. A source of social capital, Kateri's aunt was a role model for her to emulate for her personal qualities and career success. Raised on Moloka'i, her aunt was a speech therapist and married her uncle who is a pharmacist and real estate mogul. Whenever her aunt was home to visit, they had numerous conversations and discussed Kateri's college plans. Her aunt and uncle encouraged her to attend college in the Bay area. Their encouragement was a crucial source of familial capital.

They were all excited when Kateri was accepted to University of California, Berkeley but it was too expensive and she could not afford the cost of education. After one year at UH-Hilo, she transferred to San Jose State University. The relationship that Kateri developed with her aunt and her aunt's family expanded her social network and became an important source of social capital that helped her to decide to move to California to pursue her bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, her aunt died in a car accident on one of her visits to Hawai'i, but Kateri became good friends with her aunt's daughters, "cousins" by affinity, and has stayed connected with them.

Starting her first year of college at UH-Hilo was not that scary for her because she was still at home in Hawai'i, albeit on another island from where she grew up. Moving to San Jose State University was completely different and she felt dislocated from her community. The city

was much bigger with "tons of buildings, cars, people tooting [their car horns]," she said. She felt scared and cried during the first couple of months. Kateri recalled, "I wanted to go home, [but] I knew that I had to be here if I wanted to accomplish things. And I always knew that home would be there." At the time she thought the people were rude. Looking back, she realized that she "just had to learn the culture. We're just super nice in Hawai'i, we love to open doors and we love to say 'hi' to people," she said. Things were just different from what she was accustomed to, and she was not used to it. As a first-generation college student from a small community, she felt removed from her new environment. In the face of adversity, she turned to the primary source of coping strategies, navigational capital, that has always worked for her in order to navigate the new educational and social spaces that she occupied—Rosary, prayer, and church. She survived while working three part-time jobs and volunteering for the county social services. "I remember starving sometimes when I didn't have money. . . . There were days I would call in sick and not go to work. I had no money for gas," she recalled. Then on a few occasions, a check from her family would arrive in the mail out of the blue on days when she really needed it.



*Gonzaga University, where I attended one year of law school, is located in Spokane, Washington. At the time I attended it had an enrollment of 7,000 students. Spokane is billed as a big city with a small town feel. However, the university and city were much smaller and less diverse than I expected. I missed the view of the ocean and mountains, the city lights that beckoned in the distance, and the flavors and scents of Hawai'i. Unlike Kateri, who was able to power through her experience of being dislocated by cultivating a wide social network, I felt compelled to just focus on my studies because I was on full scholarship and it was ingrained in me that it should be my top priority. In my circle of first-year law students, we had a contingent*

*of four first-year law students from Hawai‘i, two females and two males, and three males from Montana, Texas, and Canada. We became good friends and I would study and socialize with them during our first semester. During my second semester, I studied less frequently in a group with them and socialized even less. In retrospect, my decision to just focus on academics without respite was, perhaps, not ideal and I failed to take advantage of an important social capital that I now understand is an invaluable resource for success and navigating the academic environment.*



In addition to her job, studies, and volunteer work, Kateri also carved out time for extracurricular activities, including dancing hula and Tahitian. The friendships and connections she made with the individuals she met were valuable sources of social capital that helped her adjust to a new culture, inspired her to excel, and provided social support. One of groups she belonged to was a Hawaiian club with a high number of members from Hawai‘i. The people in the groups she joined were very driven, goal-oriented, and accomplished. Many of their parents were college-educated. A friend, whose father was a secret service agent, competed in the Sydney Summer Olympics. The parents of another friend lived on East Oahu and had their own business. Her associates at the YMCA were also in college. They were determined to graduate and become teachers. Kateri was not intentional in cultivating the friendships of like-minded, highly motivated people. It just organically happened that they gravitated towards one another upon meeting and became part of her social network. "We loved to have a good time but we all stayed on track," she made sure to add.

At 21 years old, part of exploring the world was discovering men. Kateri exclaimed, "I'm in college. I'm away from my parents. There [are] men, oh my God they do exist!" She dated and had a great time, but was very selective and felt there had to be commitment for her to be intimate with a man. Kateri shied away from romantic relationships when she was an adolescent so this was a new experience for her. Learning from her sisters' and own experiences, exploring her interests, persisting in face of adversity, and guidance from mentors, have been sources of navigational capital and instrumental in keeping her on track to reach her goals. Although she drank, she never had any desire to do drugs. She made wonderful friends. Later in life, by the time she reached her thirties, she had lost interest in going to bars and hanging out. It was not something that she desired when she was young, so it was not surprising that she quickly grew out of this phase.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in psychology from San Jose State, Kateri earned her master's degree in child law and policy from Loyola University in Chicago. Currently, she is working on an online doctoral degree in early childhood education from Walden University. "My passion is, and has always been, to serve or work with children," Kateri stated. She thought it would land her in the field of mental health as a psychologist or psychiatrist. There was a time in her adolescent years when she wanted to be a nun and serve God, but the trajectory of her career has steered her to working with special needs infants, toddlers, and children. God had other plans for her. "I know in my heart that all of these career opportunities that I had, have been given by God," Kateri emphasized. From her job with the YMCA, she now works for the city as the inclusion (related to special needs) coordinator where her daughter

attends school. "I really believe that God has taken care of me from the beginning," she said, because of how fortunate she has been in obtaining critical positions that she has not sought but seemed to "find her" through her social and professional network.

### **Conclusion**

Sources that support the six components of community cultural wealth can both be tangible and intangible. Kateri possessed all forms of capital: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistance, and linguistic. Familial, social, and navigational have been the three most significant forms of capital that have guided her on her educational, professional, and life journey. Specific influences have been her faith (through prayer to God, Christ, Mary), maternal grandmother, and an aunt. Familial capital includes religious and spiritual knowledges and practices that were nurtured by her grandmother, parents, and extended family. She and her family have endured the impact of the closure of both Ewa Plantation Company and O'ahu Sugar and the adversities triggered by her sisters' adolescent circumstances. Kateri cultivated her relationship with Christ and Mary as personal sources of support. They are part of her daily life and are not just powerful religious figures. Her faith in a higher power has developed as more spiritual rather than religious in character.



## CHAPTER 9

### FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

In chapter one, I mentioned the critical role that the book *Out of this struggle: The Filipinos in Hawaii* (Teodoro Jr., 1981) had in defining the course of my study. Learning about the hopes and struggles of Filipinos in their first 75 years in Hawai‘i resonated with the experiences of my family. Twenty-five years after the book was published, Filipinos were still among the most socioeconomically disadvantaged ethnic groups in the State (Okamura, 2008). Thus, the hope that at the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Filipino arrivals to Hawai‘i their situation would be much improved was yet to be fully realized. During the intervening period, a number of Filipinos distinguished themselves as Filipino American "firsts" in their fields: 1) Benjamin Cayetano was the first Filipino American Governor in the United States; 2) Eduardo Malapit was the first Filipino Mayor in the United States; 3) Emme Tomimbang was the first Filipina American anchor in the United States; and 4) Angela Perez Baraquio the first Miss America of Filipino ancestry (Agbayani & Ahsam, 2006). They were role models and inspired other Filipinos to excel.

Tomimbang, who inspired the Sodalists, was the speaker at our church high school graduation banquet. The nightly news brought her into our living rooms and seeing someone who looked like us that we could relate to on television gave us a glimpse of possibilities to strive for. Meeting her in person empowered us, and her presence made us feel that we mattered. Tomimbang and the emerging Filipino leaders and figures in Hawai‘i during our formative years were sources of aspirational capital and social capital. This qualitative study recounts the stories of Filipino women who grew up in ‘Ewa and their experiences as they journeyed from the insulated plantation community to college campuses. Being from a working-class background,

first-in-family to graduate from college, and an ethnic group that has had limited success in garnering the potential of education to move up the socioeconomic ladder collectively, I was most interested in understanding the forces that influenced the women along their path to earn their bachelor's degrees. Also, I hoped that the study would offer insights on how to enhance efforts to guide and support students that I work with in high school and college.

An important contribution of this study is giving voice to those who are often forgotten, revealing the cultural wealth in communities that are seemingly lacking in resources, and learning about the factors that were most influential in the participants' educational journey. The study shows the strength of the family and community. It shines light on the transformative influence of the Sodality sisterhood and the sense of belonging and camaraderie that empowered the participants to aspire and remain steadfast in the face of adversity. This study provides a glimpse into a plantation community whose close-knit culture was a way of life for those who lived there.

Approaching the study using phenomenology and case study research methods yielded rich, thick descriptions about the participants' lived experiences. The participants' stories revealed shared experiences and similar sources of community cultural wealth. The study produced not only valuable information about the lived experiences of the participants but also insights on aspects of plantation life that was so embedded to render it almost imperceptible as something unique from other communities. Aspirational capital, familial capital, and social capital were the most dominant influences of community cultural wealth that facilitated the participants' success. They were the basis for three other forms of capital— navigational, resistance, and linguistic —that also advanced the participants' goals.

The participants viewed higher education primarily as the path to jobs that would provide more significant economic opportunities. Unfamiliar with the college environment and the full extent of what a higher education could offer outside of job readiness, the participants had unclear educational goals other than to do well academically. Although Raquel's father singled her out among her siblings to be a teacher and Gabriela became interested in nursing the summer before her senior year in high school, the others happened upon their major and career when they were already in college. Prior to middle school Kateri and Rose sincerely thought about becoming nuns, and Rose wanted to be a fashion designer. Rose was surprised once she started college when she realized her high school teacher had secured admission into a nursing program on her behalf. She remembered signing a paper that her teacher had thrust into her hands thinking it was for a test, but did not really pay much attention to it. The participants were set on succeeding and were more concerned with "how" they would achieve their goal rather than "if."

Gabriela is the only participant who graduated from the university where she first began her studies, earning her degree in 3 1/2 years. She joined a cohort of 30 University of the Philippines nursing students in the second semester of the first year of their nursing program, and then subsequently earned a master's degree from UH-Mānoa to be a nurse practitioner. Kateri started at University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH-Hilo) before transferring to San Jose State and received her degree in six years. She obtained a master's degree in child and law policy from Loyola University in Chicago and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in early childhood education. Rebecca, Rose, and Raquel first attended UH community colleges. Rebecca and Raquel completed their associate degrees and continued on and received their bachelor's degrees in education in nine years at UH-Mānoa and Armstrong State College in Georgia, respectively. Raquel also earned a master's degree in business administration in 2014. After Rose finished her

associate degree in nursing, she took a break to work and raise a family, returning to obtain her bachelor's degree in nursing from UH-Mānoa in 2014. The participants who started their journey at the community colleges took longer to attain their bachelor's degrees than those who started at a university. Regardless of where they started their journey or how long it took for them to earn their degrees, they held unto the seeds of aspirations that were planted in their formative years.

### **Findings: Research Question 1**

The first research question asked, "What factors influenced the educational aspirations, expectations, and attainment of Filipino teenage girls from a plantation community?" With one exception, the findings indicate the participants' aspirations to go to college and expectation that they succeed were planted in their minds and hearts by their parents. They embraced these expectations as their own, and were nurtured by the support of their extended family, peers and key adults in their lives. The one participant, whose aspiration originated from her own desire to be better able to provide for herself and a future family, recognized that a college degree was the means to get a job that would enable her to achieve her goal. Although her yearning was not kindled by her parents, her family's hardships and her mother's quiet support were, nonetheless, sources of familial capital that were instrumental in empowering her to hope in the face of adversity. Rebecca reflected, "I understood that my dad didn't make much money and that's why...I wanted something better for myself."

Other participants received words of encouragement from their parents and witnessed their families' resolve to surmount any difficulties to provide for their children. Raquel's father urged her to "always to do good, to strive, and to try to better [herself]." She respected his desire for her to do well, and endeavored to do her best for her parents' sake, and also because it was important to her. Going to college was a given for Gabriela and her siblings. Seeing her parents

work hard was a stronger statement than any words they could offer to emphasize their expectation for the children to continue their education upon graduation from high school. Gabriela's father helped support his sisters to get their college degrees, and they later served as role models for his children as they were growing up. Rose lived by her father's and maternal grandmother's words of wisdom: "I don't want to hear you say you can't do it" and "If there's a will, there's a way." The latter was familiar advice that my father also drilled into me. Kateri loved to read and learn, but it was not until middle school that her parents set clear expectations for her to go to college. Kateri recalled, "My mom forced me to take the [entrance] test. I didn't want to go" to Kamehameha Schools. However, her parents were insistent for Kateri to continue her education beyond high school and became more actively involved in learning about college and the application process.

### **Findings: Research Question 2**

The second research question asked, "What were the family and community forces that impacted participants' educational and career aspirations, expectations, and attainment?" Aspirational capital was the catalyst for the participants to begin envisioning their options beyond high school, which was reinforced by their families and community. Both the family and community were sources of capital that provided stability, support, and strength. Together with aspirational capital and familial capital, social capital had a tremendous impact on the participants' social, spiritual, and character development. The networks of peers and people within the town provided emotional support to navigate unfamiliar institutions and systems outside of the community.

A participant observed that the 'Ewa community was like family. This was to be expected since the basic unit of a Filipino family is the extended family, comprised of members

who are related by blood or through marriage. It often included others who were connected by artificial kinship such as the grandfatherly figure in Gabriela's family who was part of their household but was not a relative or married to one. Furthermore, since two out of three people residing in 'Ewa by the late 1970s were of Filipino ancestry, the overlapping ties combined with a shared history and culture with the rest of the plantation community created a closeness and feeling of fellowship. Beyond being a source of supportive relationships, the social networks involved shared responsibility and social controls for the welfare of the children and community.

The participants shared fond memories of growing up in 'Ewa, including the simple childhood pleasures of picking the fruit off the mango, guava, and other fruit trees that grew abundantly in the villages. They also remembered playing in the streets and park, buying snacks from the manapua truck, and the annual carnival that people from the neighboring towns would flock to. No invitation was required to attend the parties at the Varona Village social club. Men gathered at backyard cockfights, but it was also popular with the rest of the community where they could buy *kakanen*, Filipino pastries, and other foods.

Respect, humility, and family cohesiveness were essential to the strength of the family and community. The participants attributed the strong linkages and positive relationships in the community to their fathers working in the same company, families socializing with each other and attending the same church, and attending the same school with their friends and neighbors. Caring for others and being concerned about the well-being of the family and the community took precedence over any person's individual needs. They learned through the actions of their extended family and community to be caring, resourceful, and resilient. Their family support included high expectations, encouragement in the forms of advice and stories, role-modeling, strong work ethic. Parents placed their children at the very top of the family's priorities and

expected them to do well in school and be good. The participants also learned about their genealogy and were familiar with the geographic region their family came from in the Philippines.

Surrounded by a network of people who provided emotional support and took interest in their growth, the participants thrived and grew confident in their knowledge, skills, and abilities to pursue higher education. The church network was instrumental in cultivating the strength for them to mediate normal teenage behaviors that could have potentially distracted them from their educational path. Being part of the Sodality network was a critical source of social capital. Rose reflected that "Interacting with others in the church on various projects bolstered her confidence and developed her social skills, providing her with the courage to overcome her shyness and emerge out of her cocoon." Learning and practicing the skills to form new relationships and sustain those connections was instrumental in helping the participants to navigate the unfamiliar territory beyond 'Ewa, the church, and Sodality.

### **Findings: Research Question 3**

The third question asked, "What strategies did participants use to break through barriers blocking their pursuit of higher education?" This question pertains to approaches the participants utilized to effectively overcome challenges. Aspirational capital, familial capital, and social capital were the backbone of the participants' ability to overcome barriers along their path to achieving their educational goal. Participants appreciated the hardships their families endured. They heard stories about family difficulties and witnessed their fathers working hard to provide for their families. Throughout their journey, their recognition of their families' circumstances continued to be a source of aspirational capital that urged them to keep moving towards their goal. Participants had the resilience to adapt and function in new settings and culture, resolve to

work as hard as necessary, and grit to keep striving and not be defeated. These are sources of navigational capital and resistance capital that were instrumental to the participants' ability to prevail despite dealing with stressful events and situations such as these: bullying in high school; dealing with unfavorable biases about Campbell, Filipinos, and sometimes 'Ewa; financial need; and unfriendly college climate.

Upon entry into college, all participants faced hardships transitioning into the unfamiliar culture of higher education. This was a significant stressor that often can be a barrier to student success when there is a dissonance between the college culture and what the participants are accustomed to. The two participants who attended universities in the Philippines and Georgia had the greatest difficulties adjusting to the cultures of their institutions. Gabriela found the college climate at her university in the Philippines intensely competitive, and the students much more vocal than what she experienced in Hawai'i. At the university that Raquel attended in Georgia, students were wary of her. Both participants employed the skills they learned from their families and social network in making connections and building relationships. Gabriela was a nursing student and spent a lot of time with the other students in her program. She soon developed bonds and friendship with them. Raquel was undeterred by the chilly reception she received from other students at her university. She took the initiative and made it a point to get to know her fellow students on an individual basis, keeping an open mind and reserving judgment. Other students warmed up to her and she established her own learning community. The social networks that Raquel and Gabriel established were excellent sources of social capital. Their strategy to establish ties with their peers is an important source of navigational capital.

Another significant barrier the participants had to overcome was limited financial resource. With the exception of one participant who attended college in the Philippines, they



needed to work in order to be able to afford the cost of tuition, other educational costs, and living expenses. Balancing time between work and their studies was difficult, but they persevered. Family members had modeled persistence and patience. Other ways participants funded their education were through loans, and one enlisted in the military. An important strategy that three of the participants used was to initially enroll at community colleges, which were less expensive than four-year colleges—a viable option for students with financial need or who are uncertain about their educational and career goals.

Participants turned primarily to their peers for support to navigate their academic and social environments in high school and college. In high school, caring teachers, student government advisors, and counselors in their close social network played significant roles in introducing participants to opportunities and guiding them through the college application process. However, once in college the participants lacked a plan on how to achieve their goals and information on potential careers to pursue, and did not have the assistance of professionals to guide them. They were largely unaware or did not utilize school staff, resources, and programs that existed to guide and support students with their educational and career plans. Fortunately, they were able to turn to their peers for support.

Participants possessed navigational capital, which steered them along their paths to earning their bachelor's degrees. They drew on their individual sense of agency and skills to breakthrough or circumvent obstacles in their way. Sodality and its advisors were instrumental in cultivating these traits, and the participants' transformation from adolescent girls to confident young women. They reinforced what the participants learned from their families about respect, humility, and caring. Kind, loving, and spiritual, the advisors taught the Sodalists about the church. They provided emotional support and modeled behaviors and attitudes on how to be

good citizens. Comparing the Sodalists to diamonds, they made us feel special and instilled in us that we were like treasures and must take care of ourselves, lead a good life, and have God in our lives. They instilled in us self-respect, selflessness, and value in being our own person. Active participation in Sodality and being part of the sisterhood gave the Sodalists a strong moral compass and sense of belonging. The girls watched out for each other and inspired each other to be their best. There was a consciousness of what it meant to be a Sodalist, and the participants found strength in being part of this group. The camaraderie and sense of agency empowered the participants. Raquel's sister, Kitty, summed it up: "It's almost like woman's liberation, but in a different kind of way—like "girl power."

The participants also identified strongly with 'Ewa Plantation Town and felt a fondness and pride to be connected with it. The familial capital and social capital nurtured in the community contributed to their 'Ewa Plantation identity, which they tapped into in high school to help navigate and shield them from potential social conflicts. An awareness of the economic hardship and low socio-economic status of families in 'Ewa galvanized the participants to pursue higher education rather than to believe their situation was futile and accept their circumstances.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

This study found that participants' families played key roles in cultivating the youths' aspirations. The families' support sustained the participants' aspirations and ability to navigate their way in the unfamiliar higher education environment. In high school, the participants were inclined to rely on their peers, not just for emotional support but also for information and guidance about college application. This was also the case once they were in college. The participants obtained assistance from teachers, advisors, and staff with whom they had close and supportive relationships. They had established rapport with these individuals who were from

similar backgrounds or understood the participants' circumstances. However, as institutions, the participants' high school and colleges did not provide adequate systematic support for the students to prepare for or successfully transition into college and be able to navigate the academic and social challenges. If they did, participants in this study for some reason either did not know about the assistance or knew and did not use it.

This study reinforces the importance of paying greater attention to opportunity gaps and balancing it with efforts to address gaps in academic achievement. The *Tinalak* special issue of *Educational Perspectives* examined the conditions and opportunities for Filipino students from K-12 and at the post-secondary level. The data indicate improvements in Filipino student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college-going rates from the 2010-2011 school year to the 2014-2015 school year (Halagao, 2016).

Strides have also been made over the past decade in minority access, enrollment, and graduation throughout the UH system (Okamura, 2017). The percentages of persons (twenty-five years and over) with a bachelor's degree have increased since 1980 for all the major ethnic groups. However, it is still significantly below the median (29 percent) for Filipinos (17 percent), Hawaiians (15 percent), and Samoans (9 percent). With only a five percent gain since 1980 for Filipinos with bachelor's degree, it is not surprising that the group continues to be overrepresented in blue-collar occupations, have below the Hawai'i median individual income, and below the percentage of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher (Agbayani, 1996; Okamura, 2017). Okamura argues public education in Hawai'i does not facilitate the transition of

Filipinos, Native Hawaiians, and other minorities into the UH system in sufficient numbers to enable them to advance as a group in earning college degrees, acquiring professional, management or other high-status occupation, and obtaining a middle-class income (Okamura, 2017).

Halagao's and Okamura's contributions to the limited body of research on Filipino student experiences and achievements in Hawai'i can be a springboard for engaging in dialogue with families, communities, decision makers, and policy makers. In general, there is a lack of awareness of the educational status of Filipinos in Hawai'i (Halagao, 2016). Drawing from the findings of my study, I will address the following areas: 1) transition from high school to college, 2) culturally responsive curriculum and services, 3) financial need, and 4) family and community engagement and empowerment.

While the tight-knit, supportive community of 'Ewa Town cannot be recreated in its entirety, K-12 schools and higher education institutions can work together with families and their communities to create a network that will provide strong support, encouragement, and follow-through to inspire and assist youths in their educational journey.

The transition from high school to college involves a combination of factors in addition to academic preparation. Kateri's alma mater, Kamehameha, provided a wealth of institutional resources to prepare students for post-secondary education, including activities for the families of the students. Family involvement in the students' education and career pathway is an integral part of the comprehensive support for student success that Kateri's school provided, which she credits as responsible for the shift in her parents' attitude toward higher education. Her parents' engagement in her schooling raised their expectations for her to excel and continue her education beyond high school.

Gabriela's sister, Alhambra, also recognized the impact a college-going culture has on the aspirations and educational goals of students and their families, which is very different from the environment she experienced as a high school student at Campbell in the 1980s. At one of the largest public high schools in Leeward O‘ahu where she now teaches, the school has made tremendous progress in transforming students' and families' attitudes toward higher education. The school's principal attributes the success to the collaborative efforts of the faculty, staff, students, industry, community, post-secondary partners, and coordinated efforts among the schools in the complex. Students enroll in dual college credit programs. The most promising has been Early College, which is taught at the high school by college faculty during the summer or after regular school classes and gives the students a chance to experience what college is about and gain confidence in pursuing higher education.

A partnership with UH Mānoa GEAR UP has also provided academic and social support to facilitate the advancement of an entire class cohort to each grade level. Activities and services to prepare students for college include workshops, rigorous academic courses, leadership development, and early college and career exposure. Families participate in college and financial aid workshops, orientation to high school environment, and community gatherings to celebrate milestones. These activities aim to significantly increase the number of low-income students pursuing and succeeding in higher education. College students, who are former UH Mānoa GEAR UP students, serve as tutors and mentors for the high school students.

Early intervention activities can assist students in successfully making the transition from high school to college. The participants were inadequately prepared to meet the challenges of adjusting to a new environment. They were unfamiliar with the student support services and programs that were available to help them transition successfully into college. Those who

attended U.S. institutions worked and did not have much time to participate in extracurricular activities. Since many students are more likely to seek assistance from their peers, strengthening student organizations and creating spaces for students to interact informally are ways to encourage connectedness and community.

Culturally responsive curriculum and services can make learning and the college experience more relevant and meaningful. Halagao, a multicultural teacher educator, stressed the importance for teachers to understand the cultural demographics of students to be effective (Halagao, 2016). To be inclusive, it is important to recognize and build on the talents, skills, and cultural knowledge and resources that students bring to the school environment. Some of the ways this can be achieved in K-12 schools are by providing students the opportunities to pursue project-based learning and research projects that build on their prior experiences or background. A diverse panel of speakers can also be invited to share their life experiences and their careers. Learning does not have to be limited to the school setting. Students from Waipahu High School who helped with a voter registration drive and danced at a community event subsequently were requested to perform at a function for a state senator. They drew on their linguistic capital, performance art, to showcase their culture. Through this experience, they learned not only about civic engagement but also practiced their interpersonal and public communication skills, as well as expand their social network.

Policies that are incorporated into the existing core components of the university would be the most effective strategy to enhance curriculum to be more culturally relevant. First, introducing university service-learning requirements into course curriculum would be a way to connect students to the university and the broader community. Some departments and programs at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa already have this in place, and there are academic

departments that have partnerships with student services programs to give students experiences in applying the skills and knowledge that they have learned. Creating learning opportunities for journaling, self-reflection, writing about factors that facilitated academic success, and sharing about their culture can be incorporated into the curriculum of existing courses. For first-generation, underrepresented college students who might experience being disconnected from their families and communities upon their arrival, this would be a vehicle for bridging what they are learning in the classroom to real life experiences.

Policies that promote faculty engagement with underrepresented students are a way of creating a student-centered, culturally responsive environment. A sustained mentoring relationship can be a valuable resource in guiding underrepresented students to navigate and thrive in the university. Also, engaging underrepresented students in research could be mutually beneficial for faculty and student. Accounting for faculty efforts to work with underrepresented students could be addressed by broadening the promotion and tenure requirements.

Another area of major concern among the participants, which is common among underrepresented students, was financial need. Many perceived that scholarships and other types of financial assistance were merit-based, and they did not apply because they felt they were not eligible. Initiatives to provide opportunities to link students and parents to networks with experts who can assist in securing financial aid and scholarships are valuable. Expanding student and family outreach activities to venues that they frequent other than the established school and community settings is a good way to make information and assistance more accessible, including health clinics and centers, supermarkets, and beauty salons. Developing more effective ways of disseminating information to students and their families about financial resources and helping them with their application are critical. Unfortunately, the reality is that the pool of funds is not

sufficient to meet the full cost of educational and living expenses for many underrepresented students. Past UH tuition increases had negatively impacted Filipino UH college enrollment (Okamura, 2017). Although many Filipino community organizations hold annual fundraising events (e.g., gala, golf tournaments) to raise money for scholarships, more resources are needed to help defray the cost of tuition and fees. More recently, scholarships have been established by retired Filipino UH faculty and alumni through the UH Foundation.

Reenvisioning services and activities to best serve the diverse backgrounds and needs of Hawai'i students from K-12 and the UH system is an opportunity to be innovative in developing culturally responsive curriculum and services. This study focused on the forms of community cultural wealth that influenced the Filipino women to achieve their educational goals. Findings indicate the importance of family and community in the participants' successes. Engaging Filipino families and the community has the potential to reach people that have been on the periphery. Dialogue among the broad spectrum of interested and concerned parties—decision makers, policy makers, students, Filipino professional organizations, community organizations, youth groups, families, and unions—could energize and empower the various groups and individuals. There is much work before Filipinos can shed the cloak of "invisible majority" and emerge from its status as a subordinate ethnic group among the "power dynamics and social hierarchy" in Hawai'i. I hope the stories of the Sodalist, their families, the Sodality advisors, and 'Ewa Plantation community can contribute in some small way to keeping the aspirations alive.



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